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Inside this issue

Lobo's back!

The Lobo Paramilitary Christmas Special, plus 34 more new DC titles . . 6

Marvel share offer

35% of comics' biggest publisher goes public . . 5

Dredd v Batman

Why it took so long to get them together. . . 12

CONTENTS

NEWS: AMERICA	2
NEWS EXTRA: DC	6
BATMAN VS JUDGE DREDD	12
SAN DIEGO '91	14
NEWS: EUROPE	17
MEDIA FILE	23
COMMENT	24
RETAIL CONFERENCE	26
ADVANCE LISTINGS	29
RETAIL INDEX	38
REVIEWS	42
MOVERS & SHAKERS	56
LETTERS	59
CLASSIFIED	60
EVENTS GUIDE	62

CIRCULATION: 11,000

Byrne back on X-Men

WHILE MARVEL COMICS is breaking industry sales records this month, major changes have been made to the creative teams responsible for America's most successful comic titles.

In an exclusive interview with Bob Harras, editor of the top selling Marvel X-Men titles, it was revealed that the marketing of the "X-Tinction Agenda" storyline has led to the highest ever sales for American comics. A record which Marvel set less than a year ago with Todd McFarlane's new **Spider-Man**.

Although Spider-Man sold 2.5 million copies of its first issue, the revamped **New Mutants** title leapt from an average sale of 200,000 a month to 3.7 million, as the relaunched **X-Force**.

Now, only one month later, the new companion comic to **The Uncanny X-Men**, simply titled **X-Men**, has a print run in excess of *seven million copies*.

The infectious result of the promotional campaign for Marvel's new mutant titles has also had an unexpected effect on perennial favourite **The Uncanny X-Men**. While its average sale of 400,000 copies a month makes it the industry's best selling regular title, trade orders for issue 281, released the same month as the new **X-Men** launch, have passed the one million point.

Claremont off X-books

But the ultimate irony amongst these staggering sales for Marvel, and massive bonus cheques for their creative teams, is that the writer and main **X-Men** creative force throughout the last sixteen years has suddenly stopped working on any of the company's mutant titles.

Chris Claremont is officially off the books and being replaced by his ex-partner, writer artist John Byrne.

It was Byrne whose plot input and fine pen work was considered by many to have raised **The X-Men** to its high profile status for Marvel in 1976, but a creative rift led to him pursuing work on other industry giants such as **Superman, Batman** and **The Avengers**.

Now, with sales reaching unprecedented levels for the heroes he had nurtured fifteen years ago, John Byrne takes on the scripting role he was destined to inherit.

Byrne's first credits appear in the one million selling **X-Men 281** as scriptwriter, and on the new **X-Men** as co-plotter from issue 4.

Byrne's future role seems clearly defined as he takes on the challenge of maintaining both the creative and commercial momentum. As editor Bob Harras cryptically commented "It has already been discussed that John will have more input as time goes by."

Marvel prefers to refer to Claremont's recent departure merely in terms of it being a sabbatical; Bob Harras adds, "We don't have any time frame for him coming back on the regular titles. I felt that would put a strain on the books. He had been writing them for sixteen years, it might be the best thing in the world to refresh himself."

McFarlane off Spider-Man

As surprising as the news of Claremont's departure from Marvel's flagship titles came the unexpected announcement that writer-artist of the hit **Spider-Man** comic, Todd McFarlane, is also leaving his title.

The decision was so hasty that, with McFarlane unable to complete his work on **Spider-Man 15**, Marvel is accepting returned copies of the fill-in issue.

The ultimate paradox must be that the final Todd McFarlane issue of **Spider-Man** will guest star the characters who eclipsed his sales record, **X-Force**.

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NEWS america

DC to recreate Watchmen-like Golden Age

FOLLOWING the current 1950s **Justice Society** mini-series, **The Golden Age** will be a new DC 4-part series focusing on a post-**Crisis** version of the 1940s DC Universe.

Britain's James Robinson is author of the series which, drawn by Paul Smith, is set in a time before the coming of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman and takes a dark, realistic look at what happened to the heroes of the Justice Society from the closing days of World War II up to the mid-1950s.

Overshadowed by the development of the atomic bomb, such heroes as Green Lantern, Johnny Quick, Liberty Belle, Hawkman and Starman retire to their civilian identities to face a rapidly changing world.

... a dark and realistic look at the heroes of the Justice Society ...

But Mr America, a new political force with a McCarthyesque zeal and charisma, emerges. He recruits The Atom, Robotman and others into helping him create the first super-hero of the Atomic Age. When a young sidekick is transformed into such a new hero, The Dynamo, the one-time JSA allies find themselves bitterly divided over Mr America's cause.

When a hunted, haunted Manhunter appears out of hiding, the need for action becomes unavoidable and the doubting, divided ranks of the JSA are pitted against each other as they choose sides for the final battle, and the revelation of a horror which brings an end to the Golden Age.

In James Robinson and Paul Smith, DC has combined two highly talented creators. Robinson had been author of the Escape graphic novel **London's Dark** before going on to Fleetway's **Crisis**, Atomeka's infrequent anthology **A1**, and American titles **Grendel**, **Terminator One-Shot** and the current **Terminator: Secondary Objectives** mini-series.

Paul Smith first came to prominence at Marvel where he acquired a strong following for his striking depictions of **Doctor Strange** (#54 to 73) and **The X-Men** (#165 to 185) in the early 1980s.

In addition to filling in the many gaps in DC's Golden Age continuity caused by the deconstructive **Crisis on Infinite Earths**, DC intends the series to follow in the tradition of the landmark **Watchmen** story, and will be promoting the series heavily.

The prestige format 4-issue title **The Golden Age** will contain 48 pages per issue and will be published in Spring, 1992.

The Golden Age *by veteran* ***X-Men*** *artist* Paul M. Smith.

New readers: begin here

Comics International *is a monthly industry trade newspaper devoted to the comics medium. As such, it provides details of forthcoming UK and US comics and related items.*

Certain products mentioned are not available through regular newsagent shops, but only from the 'direct sale' comics specialist retailers and mail order companies. Details of such are advertised throughout the magazine, and a listing of the major specialist shops is given in our Retail Index.

Shipping dates *mentioned for American and Canadian titles are the dates copies leave their North American printers to be air-freighted to the UK for specialist shop sale approximately one week later. These dates, and titles, do not relate to newsagent on sale dates or titles.*

The Marvel and DC titles on general national distribution are on sale approximately two to three months after the air-freighted copies can be bought through specialist shops and mail order companies dealing with 'advance imports'. Because of the additional shipping costs incurred, these copies will possibly be sold at a higher price than the UK price printed on their covers.

American dollar prices *are listed for US publications, with most specialist shops converting at the rate of 65p to the dollar.*

X-artists on Marvel's new horror title

PRESENTED in a two part 64 page bookshelf format, **Legion of the Night** is a new Marvel title by Steve Gerber, Whilce Portacio and Scott Williams.

Combining the creators of current **Foolkiller** and **X-Men** titles with nostalgic villain Fin Fang Foom as lord of a bizarre cult creates an unusual formula which Marvel hopes will, together with the new Wolfman & Cola **Tomb of Dracula** title, bring the large horror following back to their titles.

Legion of the Night 1 ships September 3, priced $4.95

Byrne joins Miller in Dark Horse Presents

FURTHER boosting their on-going anthology title, Dark Horse adds John Byrne to the creative line-up for **Dark Horse Presents 54.**

The title, which already features Frank Miller's episodic "Sin City", Gray Morrow and Rick Geary, is to preview Byrne's new **2112** graphic novel, set for publication from Dark Horse later this year.

Dark Horse Presents 54 is a 32 black and white

IN BRIEF

"THE LION & The Lizard" is the new four-part story reintroducing the Vampirella character in a new mini-series produced by copyright holders Harris Publications.

Distributed by Dark Horse, the 48 page $3.95 black and white title has a Mike Kaluta cover, a Kurt Busiek script, and art by LaChance & Nyberg.

Logan's Rahn

THIS year's **Wolverine Annual**, "Rahne of Terra" has the favourite X-Man team up with Cable and the New Mutants to battle an alternate version of Magneto.

Written by **Hulk**'s Peter David and drawn by **Adam Strange**'s Andy Kubert, the adventure takes place immediately before the X-Tinction Agenda storyline on an world with characters similar to the Marvel universe.

On this world, Rahne (Wolfsbane) Sinclair is guarded by a white magician recognisable as Cable, and threatened by a black magician resembling Magneto. Wolverine of the Marvel Universe is kidnapped and reduced to a savage monster to destroy the alternate Rahne.

Priced $5.95, **Wolverine: Rahne of Terra** ships to the UK on September 17.

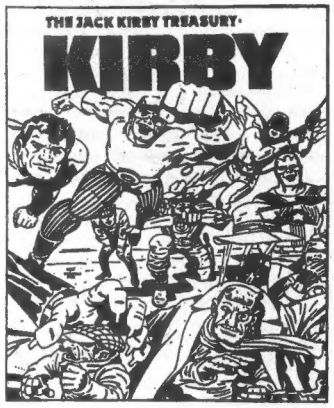
Rocketeer revisited

EVER-entrepreneurial Eclipse has reprinted their **Rocketeer** softcover graphic novel, itself a reprint of Pacific's inital storyline, to take advantage of the movie publicity.

But this has led to a disagreement between Eclipse and creator Dave Stevens, who maintains the company had no reprint rights on the work.

Nevertheless, the company has gone ahead and the $8.95 72 page title ships next month.

Kirby Classics



ALSO shipping in September from Eclipse is the long-overdue **Jack Kirby Treasury Volume 2.** This 96 page black and white softcover is written and edited by Kirby-phile Greg Theakston, publisher of the excellent **Pure Images** series.

Concentrating on the long collaboration between Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, which resulted in such creations as Captain America, Boy Commandos and Fighting American, **Jack Kirby Treasury Vol 2** carries a $9.95 cover price.

Look away, look away

CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY is a new Epic title combining the talents of writer Will Shetterly and artist Vince Stone and computer generated inks & colours.

Reprinting the Steeldragon Press 1986-1987 stories, which ran twelve issues plus three specials, the story tells of a United States where the South had broken away from the Union.

Captain Confederacy is a pregant black woman whose assistant is called Kid Dixie.

With cover inking by Al Williamson, **Captain Confederacy 1** ships September 3, priced $3.95.

IN BRIEF

FOLLOWING positive reactions to **Armageddon 2001**, DC Comics has quickly completed a sequel, **Armageddon: Alien Agenda** to ship immediately after the conclusion of the current story.

This four-part mini-series chronicles the time-travelling adventures of the villain Monarch and a surprise DC hero. They find themselves catapulted back to the time of dinosaurs, and face an alien armada hovering about Earth.

Monarch joins the aliens and begins a race through time with the survival of the entire solar system as the prize.

Written by Jonathan Peterson, issue one will be drawn by **Superman**'s Dan Jurgens.

Armageddon: Alien Agenda 1 ships October 1, priced $1.00

DC Worldwide

A NEW department of DC Comics has been created to handle the worldwide editorial production of Warner Brothers film and tv character publishing.

The department, named Warner Brothers International Publishing, is headed by director Scott Treimel, and will be responsible for about 100 pages per month of Warner cartoon comics for international syndication.

However it is greeted elsewhere, the news will come as a relief to Britain's London Editions Magazines, who had been forced into supplementing the sparse supply of US material with their own, more expensive, origination on their licenced Warner titles.

Play Press Posters

EDIZIONI Play Press has produced a second **Marvel Cover Collection.**

Focusing on Walt Simonson's Thor, it presents eight 280 x 190mm plates in a card folder and retails at £4.95.

Copies are expected in the UK during September.

Miller Time

NO RELEASE date has yet been set for the new Frank Miller **Daredevil** story.

While Miller is perhaps best known for his **Dark Knight Returns** series, totally revamping DC's Batman character, he has spe[illegible] more time working on [illegible]arvel's Daredevil than any other character.

This new project will be published as a massive graphic novel, with John Romita Jr, one of the more popular recent Daredevil artists.

Fitting in with Romita's [illegible], Miller produced a 20-page outline for Romita to draw up into a 144 page origin story.

100 pages have already been pencilled, and once completed, will be sent back to Miller to add full script copy.

In a recent issue of the US trade weekly, **Comics Buyer's Guide**, Miller told co-editor Maggie Thompson that the project was "an expanded, embellished Daredevil origin story".

Stating that it would tell how Matt Murdoch became Daredevil, he added that it would include the character's first adventure, "It was never chronicled before, because it never existed before".

He continued, "It involves the introduction of The Kingpin and chronicles Daredevil's studying with his teacher, Stick. It examines a lot of the basic motivations of the Murdoch-Daredevil character and will also include his first encounters with Elektra."

... on the dotted line

VIRTUALLY ignored in Britain, a by-product of the **X-Men** launch was a special signed copies offer made by two Californian comics stores.

Artist Jim Lee agreed to sign a limited number of sets of the August, on sale five-edition launch issue for an undisclosed fee.

Appealing to the speculator, the sets are being sold in bulk lots. Lot One consists of ten sets of the four regular $1.50 editions. The $60 retail value batch, once signed, is being sold for $200, plus $15 postage.

Lot Two consists of 20 copies of the fifth $3.95 edition with the $79 batch also being sold at $200 + $15 postage.

No mention has been made about how limited the offer will be, though cynics may suggest it will coincide with the number of orders received.

When selling autographed **Spider-Man 1** copies, writer/artist Todd McFarlane charged an extra 50c for his signature, but in this period of rampant inflation, Jim Lee's value appears to be $1.75 (on the cheaper version) or $6.05 (on the expensive edition).

In either case, the signature is now worth more than the product.

Shops Comics X-Press and Flying Colors add that a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Literacy Volunteers of America.

New Predator series from Dark Horse Comics

PREDATOR: Cold War is the title of Dark Horse's latest mini-series. By Verheiden, Randall and Mitchell, it is in the company's usual full colour, 4-part $2.50 format, and has the Predators land in Siberia.

While NYPD's Detective Schaefer (from the last series) is glad that someone else has to worry about the alien man-hunters, he finds himself back on their case, strongly against his wishes.

The Stelfreeze covers for the series combine to make one large sequence.

Predator: Cold War 1 ships to the UK in September.

Returns to sender

IN AN ATTEMPT to keep their print runs on a commercial footing, Fantagraphics Books has initiated a selected sale-or-return policy on ailing titles.

Because of the flood of new product from Marvel and DC, retailers have been reluctant to invest in independently published titles. While many Fantagraphics titles aim at an older audience, the general fear has been based on the total monthly bills retailers would have to pay. This has resulted in small selling titles being cut to release funds for higher profile investment comics.

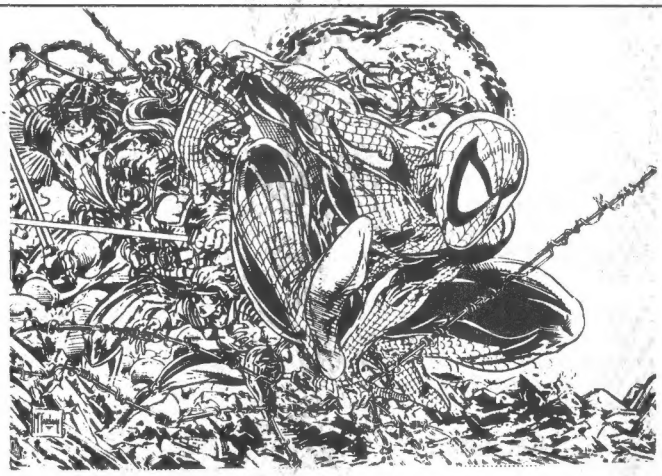
Distributors actively opposed Fantagraphics original plan, citing the disproportionate amount of paperwork and manpower involved in processing returns.

As a result, the publisher decided to deal direct with retailers on returns, emphasising that the move was in no way an attempt to compete with distributors.

While the plan is to be applauded, with comic shops possibly ordering less than five copies of most Fantagraphics titles, it remains to be seen whether the noting of return cut-off dates and the physical work and costs involved in sending back unsolds will prove worthwhile.

Were the publisher to convice other independents to work along similar lines, and establish a central collective returns address, more retailers would be likely to take up the offer.

Artwork from Tomb of Dracula #1



Spider-Man and X-Force two part crossover

MAKING the inevitable mass circulation crossover, Marvel is hoping to combine the readers of their last two multi-million copy launches.

Spider-Man 16 and **X-Force 4** make up a two-part story, both shipping September 24.

Cult creators Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld and Fabian Nicieza pool their talents to present the story "Sabotage".

X-Force travels to New York to rescue Sunspot and Gideon from Black Tom and the Juggernaut, where they meet up with Spidey in **Spider-Man 16** (the final McFarlane issue).

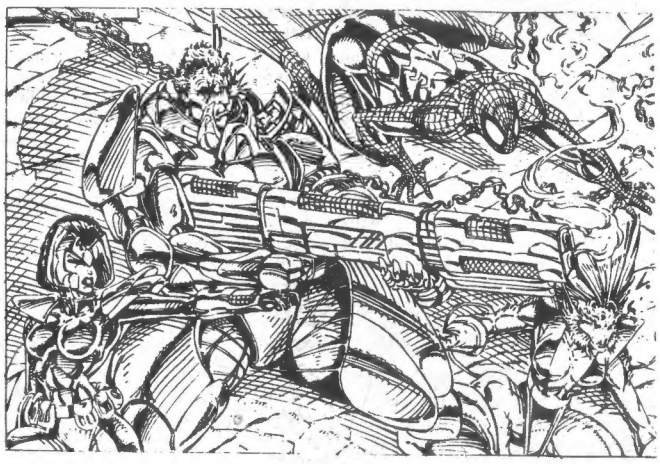
Defeating Black Tom Cassidy, but at the cost of one of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, the team moves on to challenge the Juggernaut and rescue the captives in **X-Force 16**.

While the issues won't have multi-covers, free trading cards, embossed cover stock, luminous or metallic ink, an old John Byrne **Fantastic Four** gimmick is being used to market them; they are being printed sideways on the page.

The covers and contents will be printed and stitched as normal, but the entire stories will be drawn as if for a landscape shaped comic.

X-Force 4 will be a fully distributed $1.00 newsstand title, whereas **Spider-Man 16** will be direct sale only -- a move guaranteed to frustrate thousands.

While this may not be an oversight, but rather a deliberate tactic on Marvel's part to draw readers into their more profitable outlets -- the comic shops, it can only lead to further deteriorate of an ailing relationship with newsstands, which only sell 30% of their quantity but remain the source of the next generation of fans.



Continuity re-established

CONTINUITY's new title, **Crazy Man**, has been rescheduled with the 48 page $3.95 launch issue now shipping the first week of August.

Behind an embossed card cover, the first Crazy Man story is told by Neal Adams, Alex Nino and Romeo Tanghal.

With the same shipping date, the problem beset company also promises the much delayed issues of their continuing titles: **Cyberrad 5, Megalith 8 & 9, Ms Mystic 9 & 10, Mudwog 1, Samuree 11** and **12, Urth 4 #6, Armor 12 & 13** and **Bucky O'Hare 4 & 5**.

With the exception of the prestige format **Mudwog** ($3.95) title, all are standard 32 page colour $2 comics.

Marvel Comics share issue pump-primes Perelman

MARVEL COMICS' parent company, Marvel Entertainments Group floated 35% of its shares on Wall Street in an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on July 16th.

The Marvel prospectus, designed to inform and attract potential share buyers, revealed much previously unknown about the company's financial structure, performance and intentions for its continuing market domination.

The $16.50 share price was set at 17 times estimated 1991 company earnings, the same level as newspaper companies. This contradicted the Wall Street assumption that Marvel would be more accurately compared with Topps Co., the biggest publisher of baseball cards: they sell at 11 times estimated annual earnings.

With a peak at $21 since it started trading, the share price has settled at around $20, and "seems to be stable for the immediate future" Merrill Lynch & Co., Marvel's underwriters told **Comics International**.

It is, however, true that not all shareholders will be aware of the inconsistencies in the prospectus, or of the role of Ronald O. Perelman, who, until he set the share offer in motion, was the sole owner (although five times removed) of Marvel Entertainments Group; "most people don't read beyond page 3 of the prospectus" commented an industry analyst.

Perelman bought the company in 1989 for $82.5 million - of which he actually put up only $10.5 million; the rest was borrowed from investment banks and put on Marvel's books; that is, he transfered the debt to the company.

The sale of the 4.2 million shares netted $69.3 million, of which Perelman announced that he would be keeping $41 million (59%). Marvel, for "retiring debt and other purposes" was left with the balance of $28.5 million (41%), but still carried the original $72 million debt inherited from Perelman's takeover.

Shareholders, therefore, buying at the IPO offer price of $16.5, were left with a "negative net value" (that is, minus value) of $2.98 per share.

All figures in the prospectus were calculated on the basis of Marvel "owning more than 50% of the comics market", and yet the company has only ever exceeded that level twice, once during McFarlane's **Spider-Man** extravaganza from May to July 1990, and during June 1991 with the marketing of **X-Men 1**, when its dollar share rose to 57%.

The Prospectus

One of the reasons cited for Marvel's success continuing at the 1990-91 rate was the changing demographic profile of the United States' population. During the '70s and '80s, Marvel's target group (6-18 years old) was not growing, but, the prospectus asserted, in the '90s that group would increase by 7%.

However, Marvel will have to exceed its best ever (projected) year, 1991, to prevent the share price falling. That is, to generate the revenue equal to an **X-Men** and **X-Force** launch annually.

Getting in the money

In order to service the debt and maximise returns from the average 80 titles per month published by Marvel, it is planned to increase comicbook prices by 8% per year for the next three years. Additionally, the number of pages of advertising and the advertising rates will go up proportionately over the same period.

The estimated 2500 speciality comics shops, it was revealed, account for 73% of Marvel's publishing revenue, with only 24% being newsstand. Marvel plans to exploit other forms of direct sale, targeting "custom comics" - those designed for special interest groups (for example, sports) - and distributing them through their own speciality shops.

A new fan club, WAM, is being launched, split into two sub-divisions for different age groups. By doing this it is hoped that, again, Marvel will have control of access to a direct sales market, with the increased recruitment leading to a rise in subscriptions (now accounting for only 3% of the revenue). The database gathered from WAM and from subscriptions will be offered for sale.

Outside the Marvel Universe

This policy of exploitation, seemingly without regard for the future shape of the market, has left US distributors dubious about Marvel's stated aims, especially about their effect on the direct sales market.

Milton Griepp, chief executive of Capital Distribution commented: "The source of Marvel's recent success has been the growth of speciality shops serviced by direct distribution on a non-returnable basis. Additional resources need to be devoted to the direct market and not just to exploiting the opportunities made possible by it."

With regard to the Marvel share offer itself, Griepp was reticent. "One must form an opinion about Marvel's 'intangible assets' (the potential value of licenses, etc.). That determines whether one thinks Marvel is dangerously unbalanced or a great buy."

The DC Connection

Merrill Lynch & Co., the New York underwriters acting for Marvel are also employed in the same capacity for DC Comics parent group, Time-Warner. At the same time as Marvel launched its share offer, Merrill Lynch were having to renegotiate a failed Time-Warner share issue. The original issue was set at a high price in order to raise the $2.67 millon needed to combat debts, but shareholders would not tolerate share prices which unfairly exposed them to risk.

(Sarah Bolesworth / Derek Skinn)

This page: Aquaman, Black Condor and Batman v Grendel. Facing: Black Lightning, Black Canary, Black Hood, Batman: Master of the Future, Clash.

I must say, he did manage to retain most of his calm. He shivered and sweat, of course, but he didn't thrash about or start to scream uncontrollably. Not yet.
FP-PLEASE, U-WHAT DO YOU WANT? MY WIFE IS...
FAST ASLEEP.
AND UNLIKELY TO DISTURB US AS WE TALK. YOU WILL TALK TO ME, WON'T YOU, LENNY? TRUTHFULLY, YES?
Y-YES, OF COURSE, WHATEVER YOU-

DC Comics unveils 35 new titles for next six months

DC COMICS has a massive number of new projects lined up for this year and spring of 1992 as part of the company's attempt to regain ground lost to market leader Marvel Comics.
With hardly a mutant in sight, the following is a brief alphabetical outline of projects currently being promoted by the company.

BARELY in time for the character's fiftieth anniversary, DC is reviving its king of the seven seas, who first appeared in **More Fun Comics 73** (November, 1941):

Aquaman

Stripped of his kingdom, his wife and his child, Aquaman's personality and powers are more clearly defined in this new continuing series as events lead the character to come to understand his dual nature as a man of the sea and of the land.

Portrayed as a hero with limitations, someone who doesn't always win, Aquaman is being written by new comics author Shaun McLaughlin as a icon for the '90s, in a comic blending super-hero action, deep characterisation and pressing environmental concerns.

DC assures fans that this new series will not revise but rather revitalize Aquaman, one of their most enduring characters.

The title is being drawn by Ken Hooper and Bob Dvorak, who had both worked previously on **Mister Miracle** and **Star Trek**.

Launch: Autumn 1991, $1.00.

Batman - Grendel

The long-promised 2-issue mini-series remains unscheduled, following the problems which beset original co-publisher Comico.

Once resolved, the book will ship on a fortnightly schedule, with each prestige 48 page issue being written and drawn by Grendel creator Matt Wagner, with colour art added by Joe Matt who had done similar work on **Grendel** 20 to 33.

With **Grendel** presenting a regular examination of aggression from a constantly changing perspective and **Batman** following the myopic path of a fanatical vigilante, the clash between the two holds great potential.

Batman: Holy Terror

Further increasing the Batman profile, DC has yet more prestige format one-shots in the pipeline.

Batman: Holy Terror follows the tradition established in the popular **Gotham By Gaslight** and **Master of the Future** books, set outside of Batman's normal world.

In **Holy Terror**, the world is dominated by a strict ecclesiastical authority whose word is law in matters both spiritual and secular.

Young Bruce Wayne is to enter this church's priesthood when he learns that his parents had not been killed by muggers, but by the church itself because of their 'heretic' beliefs.

Taking on the guise of a medieval demon figure -- a bat-man-- he sets out to investigate, only to learn a secret the church has withheld which could benefit the entire planet.

Batman: Holy Terror is written by Alan Brennert, best known for his **Twilight Zone** tv episodes and previous Batman work. Art is by regular Bat-visualiser Norm Breyfogle.

Cover price and release date on this 48 page prestige one-shot have yet to be determined.

Batman: Master of the Future

This is a sequel to the best-selling **Gotham By Gaslight,** which established the Bruce Wayne of 1890 Gotham who, as Batman, set out to track down the killer of his parents, Jack the Ripper.

In **Batman: Master of the Future**, two years has past since Wayne solved the murder and put away his disguise. But now he finds he is forced to wear it once more, to save his city from a crazed scientific genius.

Brian Augustyn, author of **Gotham by Gaslight** and the forthcoming **Black Condor** series, writes this sequel for **Shadow Strikes** artist Eduardo Barreto and editor Denny O'Neil.

Batman: Master of the Future is a 48 page prestige one-shot, shipping in October.

Black Canary

Presenting something of a black mass, **Black Canary, Black Condor, Black Hood** and **Black Lightning** are four established super-hero characters all acquiring their own DC titles within the next six months.

Black Canary will be a 4-issue new format series launching in September by Sarah Byam, author of Dark Horse's **Billi 99** as well as DC's **Captain Atom**. Dick Giordano will provide finished art over Trevor VonEeden layouts as Dinah (Black Canary) Lance meets Gan, the half-American half-Vietnamese community activist and together they take on the drug trade threatening their community.

Black Condor

Black Condor is a revival of the Quality Comics golden age character created by Lou Fine. Set in Philadelphia, where some would rather be, Ryan Kendall is the Black Condor, the product of two centuries of human experimentation to give a man the power of flight.

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Rebelling from the corrupt Society of the Golden Wing, he combats its wealthy and influential members in stories set firmly within the standard DC universe.

Written by Brian Augustyn, art is supplied by R. A. Morales for editor Mike Gold.

The Black Condor debuts late 1991 as a continuing $1.00 title.

Black Hood

The sixth in DC's line of Impact Comics titles licenced from the Archie Comics Group is the revived **Black Hood**, previously drawn by such masters as Alex Toth, Neal Adams, Gray Morrow, Raymond Everett Kinsler, Doug Wildey and Alden McWilliams.

The original 1940s version was revamped in the 1960s as part of Archie's camp superhero revival and for a three-issue 1983 run in the equally disastrous Archie Adventure Series/Red Circle line.

Now, the character is being edited by Mike Gold and is in the creative hands of **Breathtaker**'s Mark Wheatley and **Blackhawk/JSA**'s Rick Burchett.

Continuing the original Phantom-like theme with many generations of the character, DC/Impact portray The Black Hood's contemporary incarnation as a teenager who uses the hood's powers to fight drug lords who have controlled his city for decades.

While the theme certainly lacks originality, the character has a handsome pedigree and two fine craftsmen capable of lifting the book above the disappointing level so far attained by the Impact line.

Black Hood launches October 1991 as a continuing $1.00 title.

Black Lightning

Another revived character, this time from the 1970s, Black Lightning is now a 40 year old loner, obviously having aged quicker than Batman and the other members of The Outsiders.

Alone in the slums of a strange city, Jefferson (Black Lightning) Pierce is surrounded by decay, poverty, ignorance, drugs and prostitution. Risking cliched

continued overleaf

This page: Dragon King, Elongated Man. Facing: The Griffin, The Heckler, Hammer Locke, Darkstar, Green Lantern

continued from previous page

typecasting, author/creator Tony Isabella sets DC's only truly black new hero in an attempted gritty and realistic mirror of today's world.

Art on the series will be handled by M. D. Bright, with Brian Augustyn taking time out from his own creative projects to edit the series.

Black Lightning launches early 1992 as a continuing new format title, set within the DC universe.

Clash

Current **Animal Man** writer Tom Veitch teams with **Adam Strange**'s Adam Kubert on the 3-issue superhero series **Clash**.

Set outside the DC superhero universe, **Clash** tells of Joe McLash's search for an ancient place of great power, buried deep beneath the soil of the Middle East.

Achieving his goal, he returns home with super-human abilities, and a plan to make himself into a new world power.

Clash continues Veitch's exploration into the effect of ultimate power on everyday man, as begun in his recent **The Nazz.**

It begins in October as a 3- issue prestige format mini-series.

Darkstar

Yet to be scheduled, this continuing title will centre around one of an interstellar police force, The Darkstars, rivals of the Green Lantern Corps. Set to cross over with mainstream DC heroes, the Darkstar agent is sent to Earth to clean up this "frontier world" in preparation for its future.

Script is by Michael Jan Friedman, with art assigned to Larry **(Alien Legion)** Stroman and Scott **(The Comet)** Hanna.

Dragon King

A renowned comics creator returns to DC with a new prestige format mini-series next spring as Gil Kane writes and draws a retelling of the legend of King Arthur in four 48 page issues.

Elongated Man

Spinning off from and crossing over with **Justice League: Europe**, the stretchable sleuth finally receives his own series, after 31 years as a supporting character.

First introduced in 1960's **Flash 112**, his early humour pioneered the style now prevalent among DC's $1 titles. Creators Gerard Jones and Mike Parobeck continue the theme as Elongated Man investigates the deaths of several key diplomats to the European Congress.

Elongated Man launches November as a 4-issue $1.00 title.

Future Tense

A continuing new format monthly, by Len **(JSA)** Strazewski and Tom (Neal Adams) Grindberg set in the subversive cyberpunk future of the year 2001.

Beginning this winter, **Future Tense** will have each story told in twelve issues and DC compares its nihilistic approach to that of **Kid Eternity** and Clive Barker's **Hellraiser**.

Generation Zero

A 120 page science fiction graphic novel by Archie Goodwin and **Digital Justice**'s Pepe Moreno, **Generation Zero** is a compilation of the original **Epic Illustrated** serial set for publication September 17, priced $14.95.

Green Lantern Corps

A one-shot hardcover by Hugo and Nebula sf award winner Larry Niven (story), tv animation writer Sharmon DiVono (script) and the prolific John Byrne (artwork).

The plot revolves around Krona, the obsessive scientist who had tampered with fate at the beginning of time. The Guardians set out to correct his tampering by altering history, and three Lanterns (including Hal Jordan) follow them to save their destroying the universe.

Green Lantern Corps graphic novel is scheduled for an early 1992 release.

The Griffin

Originally a character published by Slave Labor Graphics, **The Griffin** ran only three issues in 1988. Now the original writer, co-creator and publisher Dan Vado has done extensive rewriting, together with artist co-creator Norman Felchle to present the character as a DC mini-series.

With inking by **Doom Patrol** and **Doctor Fate**'s Mark McKenna, the story tells of a teenager recruited by a race of aliens in the 1960s returning to Earth two decades later as a super soldier, with another alien powered being in pursuit.

The Griffin is a 48 page prestige format 6-issue series beginning in September, priced $4.95.

The Heckler

Legion authors Kieth Giffin and Tom & Mary Bierbaum reunite on the light-hearted title **The Heckler**.

The character's greatest super-power is his endless stream of biting insults, and he fights the bad guys purely for the fun of it.

Continuing the humorous approach of Giffin's work on the **Justice League** titles, **The Heckler** will be a $1.00 continuing monthly comic launching at the end of 1991.

Human Target

Following countless delays in an attempt to tie-in with the tv pilot, a full year after initially being scheduled, **The Human Target Special** ships October 8, priced $2.00.

By Mark Verheiden, Rick Burchett and Dick Giordano, the 48 page one-off has stand-in hero Christopher Chance doubling as a prominent US drug agent who is marked for death by the Colombian cartel.

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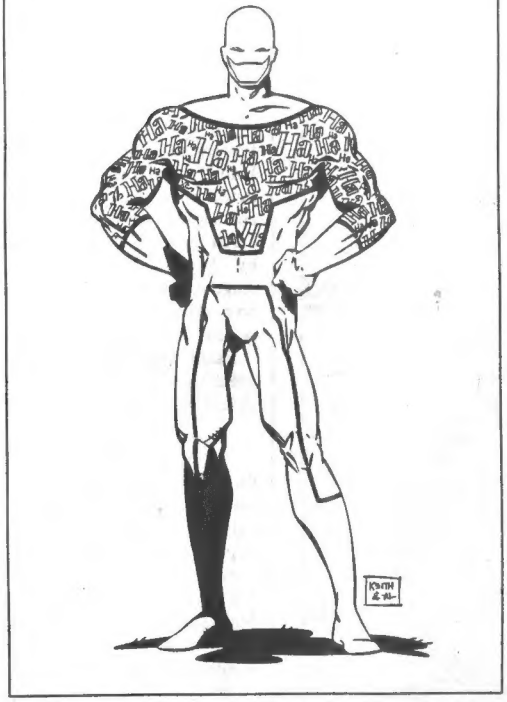
Ha Ha Ha

SOME PEOPLE WANT FAME, SOME WANT FORTUNE. MY NAME'S CHRISTOPHER CHANCE, AND THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT.
THEY CALL ME THE HUMAN TARGET. I TAKE THE PLACE OF PEOPLE MARKED FOR DEATH. PLAYING HIGHLY PAID STAND-IN IN REAL LIFE DRAMAS OF LIFE AND DEATH. THE TRICK'S TO UNCOVER THE HOW AND WHY OF A CHASE BEFORE TAKING THAT FINAL BOW.
CONTINUED SURVIVAL IS MY BEST REFERENCE. YOU WOULDN'T THINK THERE WOULD BE MUCH CALL FOR MY KIND OF WORK--
--BUT THEN WE LIVE IN STRANGE AND DANGEROUS TIMES. I FOUND OUT JUST HOW DANGEROUS WHEN I SIGNED INTO--

This page: The Human Target, Ironwolf. Facing: Lobo, My Name is Chaos, Modesty Blaise, Legion Archive, Metal Men.

continued from previous page

issue series to ship next spring.

Brighton-based character creator Peter O'Donnell produces his first American comics work in writing the series for artist Dick Giordano which will be published in prestige format 48 page issues.

My Name is Chaos

Original artist of the **Hellblazer** title, Lancashire's John Ridgway returns to DC to draw the Tom Veitch 4-issue prestige format title, **My Name is Chaos**, which debuts in December.

In the series, writer Veitch continues his exploration into the link between the supernatural and the superheroic, as begun in **The Nazz**. The setting is the near future, where a marine biologist, Tom Valis, is researching into a possible solution to depleted natural resources through communication with whales.

But the biologist's brother has been secretly training an army of surgically-enhanced supermen.

Tom, who becomes the harbinger of mankind's next evolutionary step, must first control his brother's wild ambitions.

9 Princes in Amber

Award-winning fantasy author Terry Bisson (**Talking Man**) adapts Roger Zelazny's classic novel into three 48 page issues, as yet unscheduled. Full painted art being produced by Lou Harrison, last seen in Epic's **Hellblazer.**

The Outsiders

The '80s title returns as a new format continuing monthly comic, with series creator Mike W. Barr once again chronicling the team adventures of Geo-Force, Halo, Katana and Looker.

With art by Britain's Bryan Hitch, the series presents the team as true outsiders, hunted outlaws who reunite to protect themselves and prove their innocence to the world.

The Outsiders will debut in spring, 1992.

Skull & Bones

Ed Hannigan is to write and draw a 3-issue 48 page prestige mini-series, **Skull & Bones** tackling the problems of today's Soviet Union, within the context of a hard-hitting super-hero story.

Skull & Bones launches in spring, 1992.

The Super Image

Breathtaker creator Mark Wheatley is teaming up with George Kochell to produce a one-shot parody magazine, **The Super Image**.

Offering "affordable solutions to world shattering problems", The Super Image is a ficticious mail order catalogue providing everything from fighting gadgets to devices to keep track of what dimension you're in.

This 64 page magazine has yet to be scheduled.

The Warlord

The character who first brought creator Mike Grell to DC is to be relaunched through a trade paperback reprinting early stories, followed by a six-issue new format series to be written by Grell.

Avatar artist Dameon Willich will provide pencil art and Rick (**Checkmate**) Hoberg will ink.

The trade paperback is set for a December release, with the mini-series unscheduled, presumably awaiting initial reaction.

Archive Editions

In addition to its range of regular new titles, DC is to continue its special projects.

O Both the **Batman Archives** and **Superman Archives** will continue to chronologically reprint the rare early adventures of DC's leading characters, and will be joined by two new series.

O **All-Star Archives** is set to be published as a hardcover annual beginning this November reprinting the scarce wartime adventures of the original Justice Society.

The first edition will reprint stories from **All-Star Comics** 3-6, the issues which introduced comics' first super-team in 1941.

Contributors to these stories include Gardner Fox, Sheldon Mayer, Bernard Bailey and EE Hibbard.

O **Legion Archives** will be a hardback publication, reprinting the original silver age stories, beginning with the first appearance of The Legion of Super-Heroes from **Adventure Comics 247** (1958).

Greatest Stories

The company's boastfully titled **Greatest Stories Ever Told** series is set to continue, reprinting the greatest (DC) stories (in comics) that will balance and fit well into the format.

Forthcoming hardcovers include a two-volume **Greatest '1960s Stories** set which, as well as the inevitable Superman, Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, Atom and Wonder Woman tales, includes Aquaman, Adam Strange, Doom Patrol and Challengers of the Unknown.

With 288 pages per volume, the publishing date has yet to be set.

The earlier published **Greatest Golden Age Stories Ever Told** hardback is set to be reprinted as a trade paperback in October.

Special Projects

DC also has a wide range of commissioned unscheduled projects in preparation. These include:

O **Blood & Shadows**; a four-issue prestige format horror series by newcomer Joe R. Lansdale and

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Aliens artist Mark A. Nelson. It tells a story that spans time, space and the boundaries of sanity as private detective Chet Daly pursues a strange deity known as The God of the Razor. Chet's aim is to prevent this dark force from permanently entering and dominating our dimension.

Set outside the DC hero universe, each issue will be 48 pages.

O **Green Arrow & The Butcher**; a six-issue new format 32 page series by Mike Grell, Mike Baron and Shea Anton Pensa which reintroduces John Butcher (following his 6-issue mini-series from last year) and co-stars Black Canary and The Question.

O **The Hacker Files**, set within the DC hero universe, introduces the creator of the Digitronix Computer, now installed everywhere from The Pentagon, to Hollywood, to the Batcave. **Time Masters** co-author Lewis Shiner tells the story of the man who helped design the super computer discovering a sinister global scheme behind the invention.

Suicide Squad's Sarge Steel is set to guest-star in the first 4-issue storyline.

O **Hammerlocke** is the sf creation of new writer Tom Joyner and **Power of the Atom** artist K. S. Wilson. The eight-issue series is set in the year 2030, after a limited nuclear exchange had brought nations together. It tells of Sir Arthur Locke, designer of The Star Bridge, an intersteller elevator providing access to the stars.

A serious injury ends Locke's dreams, until he is reborn as the world's first cyborg, Hammerlocke.

O **Tell Me Dark**: an 80 page hardback graphic novel by horror author Karl Edward Wagner and artist Kent Williams. Dark evil forces beset London, and an American abroad finds himself caught up with sinister cultists.

...The "DC Explosion", take two.

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THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
MY MAGNETIC EYES WILL SLOW DOWN THAT CRIMINAL GETAWAY ROCKET. KNOCK OUT THEIR RAY-GUN WITH A BOLT, LIGHTNING BOT!
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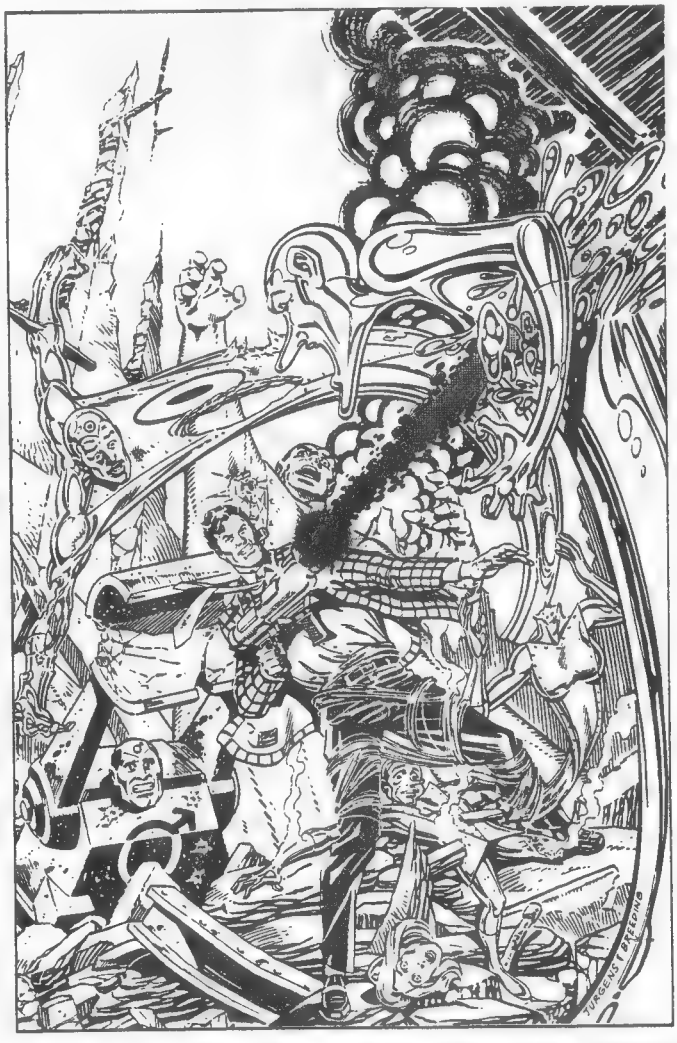

All artwork in this feature is (c) DC Comics, 1991

Judge Dredd v Batman

Judgement on Gotham

Almost a decade in the making, the ultimate lawman versus the ultimate vigilante. The publishers of these two leading comics characters first looked at a co-publishing arrangement in the early 1980s. Comics International spoke about the project to Steve McManus, managing editor of the 2000AD Group and the title's co-editor.

DC COMICS first embarked on co-publishing projects with its biggest US rival, Marvel, in 1975 with the inauspicious 84pg giant treasury edition ***MGM's Marvelous Wizard of Oz****. This unlikely start led to four successful superhero co-productions,* ***Superman vs Spider-Man*** *(1976, 96 pgs, tabloid),* ***Superman and Spider-Man*** *(1981, 68 pgs, tabloid), the unlikely match of* ***Batman vs the Incredible Hulk*** *(1981, 68 pgs, tabloid) and 1982's regular sized fan favourite* ***Teen Titans/X-Men****.*

The proposed next venture ***Avengers/Justice League*** *failed to materialise due to a soured editorial relationship between the companies, and resulted in embarrassing public bickering in DC and Marvel pages.*

Now rumours are confirmed that DC and Marvel are again talking about co-productions, including reprints of their previous ventures together, but first DC's major asset is being teamed with other publishers for ***Batman vs Predator****,* ***Batman/Grendel*** *and the long-awaited Batman vs Judge Dredd adventure, now materialising as a graphic novel,* ***Judgement on Gotham****, which ships November 27.*

Ten years in the making

Why has it taken so long to get the project through?

McManus: Fortuitously, I've kept all the correspondence in a file I've been lugging round for years. It makes it easier to follow if we call this Attempt Number Two. Attempt Number One being that which Nick Landau and Mike Lake of Titan conceived with creators Alan Moore and Brian Bolland.

Attempt Number Two originated with me when I wrote to DC publisher Jenette Kahn on August 3, 1987 proposing a joint publishing venture. Having been impressed with Frank Miller's **The Dark Knight Returns**, I envisaged Batman/Dredd in the same format.

I had known about the earlier discussions, of course. I can't claim it was my idea, but I think it would be any comic fan's ultimate dream to see such a team-up. The real challenge is in making it work.

Even as Attempt Number Two, it was 1987 when you proposed it. That's still quite a long gestation period it went through.

As I recall, my letter was passed to DC's editorial head, Dick Giordano. He agreed with our choice of creative team: Alan Grant and John Wagner writing, plus Alan Davis handling the art. They were all familiar names to him, but I think his exact words about Alan Davis were "If you can get him" because Alan was working for Marvel at the time. He then told me the final decision would be made by Paul Levitz. So I had to ring up Paul and persuade him. Apparently, he'd been closely involved with Attempt Number One, when I understand a contract was actually drafted, but the British end -- IPC at the time -- objected to something and, basically, walked away from the deal. This had caused everyone a lot of wasted work, so I had to convince Paul Levitz that we were serious. To his credit he said, "Okay, I trust you".

Format change

So it was structured to be a Dark Knight-style prestige format 4-parter . . .

Right, but there wasn't much I could do with the two companies writing back and forth, not until contracts were signed. It was changed into a one-off book in August 1988. **The Killing Joke** had come out, and it just seemed to me that it was a much better format.

Wouldn't it be a more commercial venture as a mini-series?

Well, obviously it would be great to do every week, or as a daily ...

It's just that both the Batman/Grendel and Batman vs Predator titles are mini-series.

Really? Well it's too late now, but we could always look at a sequel.

Creative changes

When did the creative line-up change?

After the publishing contracts were signed, which was in December, 1989. During the whole business of agreeing details, our division was sold to Maxwell, so we acquired a new managing director and he had to be sold on the project all over again. Once that was done it was 1990 and we got down to the creators deal, which was to be like the usual American set-up. But I don't think Alan Davis was entirely happy with the creator contract, and he felt it would be better to opt out. So we had to find a new artist.

Was it ever considered approaching the original team of Alan Moore and Brian Bolland?

No, because Dredd had always been written by Alan Grant and John Wagner, so I can't see any reason, then or now, to ask somebody else whose book it isn't, to write it. And for Brian Bolland to draw 64 pages, I think that would take rather a long time. Besides, I don't think he particularly wanted to draw Dredd again. When Simon Bisley was suggested, everyone seemed happy.

Co-Publishing

Co-publishing. What exactly does that involve? Who pays who and gets what?

Production-wise, the plan is still being worked out with DC, but basically we send them the camera-ready originals. They make the films, print their version, send us the films back and we print ours. If things don't change.

There will be several editions?

DC will do a $2.95 or $3.95 edition, as a comic-size trade paperback, and ours will be a larger **Slaine** format graphic novel. We also want to do ours as a cheaper newsstand one because you can't put a £5 graphic novel on the racks for the mass market.

So DC will have a cheaper version, they're printing first, and yet you told me Titan anticipates ordering 40,000 of your edition for the UK direct sale market?

Well, ours will be a better format, and it really doesn't matter since everything's a 50-50 agreement.

So everything goes into the same pot, irrespective of who does what?

Irrespective, but obviously we want our edition out here and theirs out in America. Of course a few of theirs will creep into this country, but why import 40,000 of theirs when ours is in a local warehouse?

Because yours costs possibly twice as much.

But DC may yet decide to do an **Arkham Asylum** format with it, and charge $25, in which case we'll be shipping to America (laughter).

The Plot

Can we talk about the content?

It's now a 64 page story, and Alan Grant and John Wagner had to crack the problem of getting the two characters to work well together. In the end, they hit on a very good idea; to use not only Dredd and Batman, but also the regular supporting characters Judge Death, Mean Machine Angel, Judge Anderson, Scarecrow, but no Robin or Joker. Denny O'Neil has been the DC co-editor on the book and he's been remarkably supportive, changing only things which would be out of character for Batman.

And the storyline ... ?

Well, I can tell you what it's not going to be. I won't be an angst-ridden book. It's a great 64-page action adventure story set in both Gotham City and Mega-City One. The time jumps are to do with Judge Death, handled in a very simple way that has been demonstrated before in **2000AD**.

Does Dredd's somewhat extreme way of dealing with perps create any problems in Gotham?

He doesn't really have much time to judge the citizens, he's too busy dealing with a far greater problem that involves Anderson and Batman together with Judge Death and The Scarecrow. Events move so fast that they're in and out of Gotham quite quickly. I have to stress that it's not a team-up. It is Batman versus Dredd. There's no way these two could team up, not even in the accepted reluctant-but-up-against-a-bigger-foe American style. I think when people read it they'll be pleasantly surprised. It's nice to see a project that's been talked about for so many years finally materialise, especially with such a strong concept.

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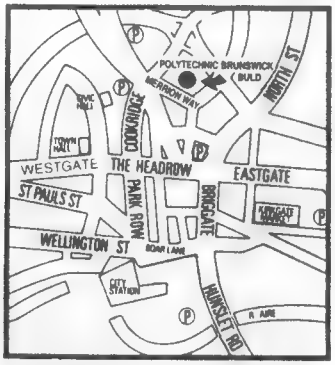

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San Diego Comic Convention '91

Last month Paul Gravett reported on the Barcelona Comics Festival 1991, an event which reflected the European acceptance of comics as a valid popular art form. This issue's authored report is on the biggest annual American Comics Convention, which prefers to celebrate the more commercial aspects of the industry.

The annual mega-con for English-speaking comics fans, pros and hucksters took place in California's seaman-strewn San Diego last month. Traditionally a place for UK dealers to pick up bargains and creators to pick up contacts, back issue trade came in a poor second to new project brain-storming this year. Lots of drinking and socialising for assorted freelancers and freeloaders, but infested with Brits. "One round every corner," a conventioneer reported. "You couldn't walk into a restaurant without finding a tableful".

Last year, the event was swamped by the Hollywood movie moguls, jumping onto the comics-to-movies bandwagon. Hot on the heels of Batman, Turtles, Tracy and Rocketeer, they were snapping up options on almost anything held together by staples. This year? They must have found a new toy, hardly a one to be seen. Which brings to mind a great line Will Eisner once said about film options, remembering George Pal's **Doc Savage** fiasco, "I hope they never make a movie of **The Spirit.** At the moment I get a nice little option cheque every year, but God forbid they actually take the option up. Chances are it'll be a dud, then it's bye-bye option money".

The idea of annual comics get-togethers grew out of Phil Seuling's New York cons of the late '60s. But they've rapidly changed into little more than new product promos, seemingly taken over by the big guys who want to use the event to push their new books. The artists have got in on the huckster act, too. You can see these once revered demi-gods sitting behind dealer tables between pimply seventeen year olds, selling old pages of their artwork for a few extra bucks.

The nice guys at Number Two But Trying Harder Capital City Distribs laid on a retailers' dinner (complete with hard-sell from publishers, but something had to pay for the food). Marvel talked millions, DC paled, and Dark Horse stole the show through their inimitable Bob Shreck: "Uh, what else did we have lined up? Oh yeah, we've a... a Terminator-RoboCop series by Miller and Simonson coming too."

Beautifully delivered stumblings about genuinely exciting projects, sending vendors wild and blowing away the hard-sell hypers.

Dark Horse head honcho Mike Richardson even dropped a hint that his Hollywood film spin-offs could soon lead to making their own movies. Cuts out the licencing fees, Mike.

DC saved face with a **Tiny Toons** cartoon starring Dark Duck and Robin the Boy Target. A spot-on spoof that scored as high as the bullseye on Robin's chest. So, when does everyone else get to see it?

The Impact Comics stand in the exhibitors hall proved just about as inappropriately named as the Neal Adams 'Continuity' Comics line. With their random frequency, the Adams family titles should have been named Blue Moon Comics (as in "once every..."). They've now come up with a new corporate slogan which you'll see as soon as they get any titles out, Continuity: "It's our year". Your year for **what**, Neal -- getting your backlog out? Your line's solid and it would sell great ... if it ever came out!

But the main gossip on the floor was about Marvel's big gun creators playing musical chairs with Walter (!) Simonson heading for Dark Horse and McFarlane jumping off **Spider-Man**. Denials persisted over Jim Lee getting itchy feet, but the young turks are certainly starting to challenge the old guard, with the latest casualty being Claremont doing a rapid X-it. Sabbatical? According to my dictionary, unless Marvel's talking about something to do with Sunday, the word's normally used in connection with a year. Ever hear of a sabbatical being open-ended?

As for the 'amicable' parting, would you quit a new title that launched as the top-selling American comic ever ... to write a one-off **Star Trek** hardback for DC?

Maybe if Chris had worked with the same editor for a decent stretch, he'd have been easier to keep tabs on. Now John Byrne will be tying up his plot threads. John Byrne: the man who was reported to have walked off **She-Hulk** when his editor overruled him about Shulkie not needing to shave her legs. But there aren't nearly enough creators to go round, so he's back on the book now ... with a new editor. But that's small change compared with his going back onto **X-Men,** where he first made his name alongside Chris Claremont. Weren't he and Chris pals once?

What is it about comics that makes so many creative teams end up wanting to nuke each other? Ex-**Revolver** editor Peter Hogan said after one month in the business, "I thought people were pretty nasty in the music world, but this is worse."

And the divorce is always so public. If anyone actually cared, there'd be enough bile coming out of comics every week to keep **The National Enquirer** full. Check the small print before you sign the contracts, guys. This kind of PR isn't good for morale.

Talking of which, my mole at the latest DC editorial retreat had a few words to say on that subject. Morale was reported to be out spelunking somewhere with Cave Carson. DC opened its wallet to take editors and creative sorts away for the latest think-tank session in a secluded hotel, and came back with a bagful of sarcastic slogans far too cutting to repeat here.

MC Gaines has an awful lot to answer for.

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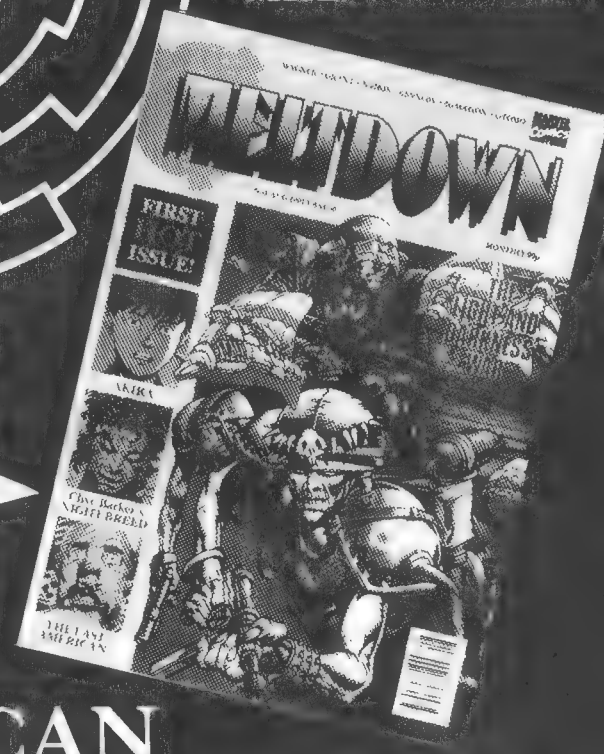

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NEWS europe

Longest Strip tease in Soho

Many of Britain's top comics creators will be gathering in Piccadilly Circus, London on Saturday, September 7th in an attempt to create the world's longest comic strip.

With the Bayeux tapestry having a 240 foot length it is considered to be the longest piece of sequential art in the world, but under the scrutiny of Guinness World of Records Exhibition staff, as many as 125 comics artists will set to work to produce a 250 foot strip.

With each artist producing two one foot square frames, the entire plot is being developed by Alan (**The Watchmen**) Moore. It is then being broken down into five chapters, with a different comics writer scripting each.

The entire event is being staged to help prevent the closure of the London Cartoon Centre, with creators donating their time and talent to the project for which publishing rights will then be offered.

Money will also be raised by both the public and the business world sponsoring individual comics frames.

The event is being cordinated by Andrew Sewell's Naked Eye Productions in conjunction with the Guinness World of Records Exhibition and, as creative consultant, **V for Vendetta**'s David Lloyd.

Artists wishing to contribute, or individuals requiring more information should contact Andrew Sewell at *Naked Eye Productions, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8RF. Telephone 081 449 2810.*

Academic Achievement

The London Cartoon Centre, part of the registered charity The Portobello Trust, began life as a section of a youth project in 1985 training unemployed young people. The popularity and demand for its classes led to a dedicated centre being created.

The Centre has been running a full time programme of evening, daytime and weekend classes in comic strip and cartoon creation for the last two and a half years, relying on the fund raising events of its parent trust.

"Almost all the money we've raised has come from the private sector," said Neil Johnson, director of The Portobello Trust. "But even with generoud grants in the past from such companies as Virgin Communications, the Centre cannot meet the full costs of this year's training schedule for the students."

Unless funding can be found, this unique resource is faced with imminent closure.

With classes being taken by creators from Fleetway, DC and Marvel Comics, the exceptionally high standard of tuition has resulted in ex-students finding careers with top publishers. It has also designed a course for the first ever national qualification in sequential art, backed by the Royal Society of Arts dimploma scheme.

"It's so ironic," said Centre manager Eve Stickler, "that at a time when the London Cartoon Centre is achieving such great things academically, it is having to fight tooth and nail for financial survival."

Public Support

While publishers who have benefited directly from the work of ex-students have been slow in offering financial support for the next generation of comics artists, reaction from specialist traders and fans has been far better.

New London-based comic shop, *Graphically Speaking* is donating 10% of its takings on Saturday August 10 to the LCC. Salisbury's *Floppy Tongue Comics* is holding a charity telephone auction for a rare autographed set of **X-Force 1**, and *the 1991 UK Comic Art Convention* is donating the entire proceeds of its star auction to the Centre.

Proprietor of Newcastle-based comics mail order company *Lynchburg Books & Comics*, Nicholas Hood donated to the **Comics International** LCC Appeal last month, as editor of **Soulmates! UK** and made a second donation this month, stating "We all benefit from the LCC, be it individually or as a comics producing country. So why aren't we prepared to put something back into the medium we all claim to love so much?"

Donations

Readers of this magazine still have the opportunity to make donations to the **Comics International LCC Appeal** and receive an honourable mention in print. Contributions are requested to be a minimum of £5 per individual or fanzine, £20 per working creator, £30 per comic shop and £100 per publishing company, and cheques should be made payable to *The Portobello Trust*, sent to:

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There are more than ninety tables with over 200,000 comicbooks and magazines on sale, including S.F., fantasy, film and T.V. related items, from Britain's top dealers.

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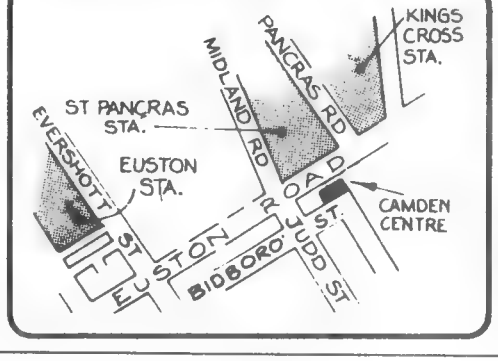

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Zenith acquires Dan Dare for 1993 tv series

Report by
SARAH BOLESWORTH

EPITOME OF Britishness Dan Dare will finally appear on tv in an adaptation of the **Eagle** strip to be broadcast in 1993. The £4 million deal was concluded after years of unsuccessful negotiations between publishers IPC (later Fleetway) and numerous film and tv production companies.

Zenith, makers of the high ratings-pullers **Inspector Morse** (ITV) and **The Paradise Club** (BBC1) were the successful bidders for the Dan Dare rights through Fleetway's licencing agents Copyright Promotions.

The 12-part series was announced through a public signing of the deal by Kevin Maxwell (now heading up Maxwell Consumer Publishing, Fleetway's parent group) Charles Denton of Zenith and Charles Day of Copyright Promotions in a flurry of PR and press attention at a Park Lane hotel on July 2nd.

The deal was a result of 18 months' negotiations conducted by Jon Davidge for the publishers and Charles Denton for Zenith.

Head of Developments for Zenith Archie Tait has "intensively researched the whole history of Dan Dare," said Fliss Coombes, spokeswoman for the film and tv company.

"He looked into every stage of the development of the character since Frank Hampson's original visualisation," she told **Comics International**.

Despite all the recent deconstructions of the Dare mythology, Tait decided that the most attractive and potentially successful realisation of the RAF "pilot of the future" for a '90s audience was that originally conceived by Hampson in the Bakehouse Studio in Botanic Road, Southport, in 1950.

Hampson's studio, which employed several local artists in order to meet the demand for the **Eagle** strip, generated a number of detailed drawings to "furnish" the character's stories which will provide an unrivalled source of genuine material for the construction of Dan Dare's universe on film.

Buying the rights to the film or tv adaptation had been a long-cherished aim of Zenith's chief executive Charles Denton. While Programme Controller of the (now superseded) ATV north-east region during the '70s he tried to negotiate with IPC for the option, but found that the cost of the production would be prohibitive for television budgeting.

One of the most important elements in the decision to develop the series at this time is the rapid evolution of computerised post-production facilities for tv and film. Using digital suites it has suddenly become possible to create an "authentic" animated backdrop without having to use painting or sets, over which live action will be "keyed" (superimposed). This technique, although not cheap, is much less expensive than physically building and filming sets. So it is that Hampson's unique vision of the alternative reality that Dare inhabited will at last come to fruition on the screen.

Fleetway Publications (which also includes the potentially attractive **2000AD**) is naturally more than satisfied with the deal, which, at a time when much of the Maxwell empire is being unpacked, distinguishes it from other more vulnerable companies in the MCC stable.

"We're very pleased with Zenith getting the rights," Fleetway's Peter Acton told **Comics International**.

"It is exactly the kind of company to do justice to Frank Hampson's work, and Archie Tait's done a lot of digging to make sure that everything is accurate."

The transmission date and the broadcaster of the series "have yet to be decided," said Zenith's Fliss

Coombes. "That's entirely dependent on what happens with the tv franchise bids in the autumn," she added.

"Really we're still at the development stage; we're talking to several writers and we haven't yet decided who's going to play Dan Dare, despite all the speculation at Ladbrokes and in the media,".

Asked if he had any preferences for the lead part, Fleetway's Peter Acton told **Comics International** that he had "a few ideas, but," he said, "it doesn't have to be a 'name' actor; the Dan Dare idea in itself is so strong that a name might even detract."

O Latest extraordinary Dan Dare fact was reported in the **Manchester Evening News** (Frank Hampson's local paper) on 11th July. A group called "The Colonial Pioneers" has apparently put together a package for a 'Dan Dare Theme Park', and says that it has the financial backing to go ahead. The 200-bedroom hotel, roller coaster and auditorium would be situated near "Baker Street" - part of the **Sherlock Holmes** Granada studio lot.

Funding will be provided by a consortium likely to include the Manchester Economic Development Corporation, itself pump-primed by the Dept of Trade and Industry.

Rupert Bears Up

Rupert Bear, one of the oldest British cartoon characters and star of the longest running newspaper strip in the country is about to appear on television for the first time in an animation series *writes Alan Woollcombe.*

Express Newspapers have announced that Nelvana, the Canadian-based company responsible for animating the similarly ancient **Babar the Elephant** French cartoon character last year, are producing 13 half-hour episodes of **Rupert** for children's television to be screened in the autumn.

To tie in with this there will be a massive publicity push of Rupert merchandising until, as a spokesperson for Express candidly admitted, "It's coming out of your ears".

Express Newspapers themselves, who have been quietly reprinting their earliest classic **Rupert** annuals since last year and selling them through mail order only, are also planning to publish eighteen new books featuring the little bear from Nutwood in addition to the regular Annual.

Despite the extra publicity, however, the Express group insists that Rupert and his pals will stay much as before: "we are updating Rupert, but we're not putting trainers on him".

O**Rupert Bear** was launched in the 1920s at the height of the craze for animal cartoon strips, but outlasted his more comedy-oriented rivals such as **Teddy Tail** and **Pip, Squeak and Wilfred**. From the 1930s to the 1960s his exploits were drawn by Alfred Bestall, who defined the quintessential Rupert look (red sweater, yellow check scarf and trousers) and drew both the daily strip and the **Rupert** annuals. Since then John Harrold has been the regular artist.

*Above: Rupert's first appearance on the woman's page in the **Daily Express**, 8th November 1920.*

UK Comic Art Convention '91

THE SEVENTH annual London comics convention to be organised by Frank Plowright's Rusty Staples company will be held at the regular venue of The Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London W1 on Saturday, August 31st and Sunday September 1st.

Admission on the door will be £20 for the full weekend and £12.50 for a single day, with children under 14 if accompanied by an adult.

Guests so far confirmed include DC's Mike Barr, Archie Goodwin, Andy Helfer, Dan Jurgens, Tom Lyle, Denny O'Neil and Tom Veitch. Marvel is represented by Mark Gruenwald and indie creators include Mark Bode, Michael T. Gilbert, Mike Kaluta, James Robinson, Lewis Shiner and Kent Williams.

Golden Age guest of honour is the creator of the original Green Lantern, Martin Nodell, and 1960s top DC sf artist Murphy Anderson will also be in attendance.

Most of the top British creators from Apocalypse, Fleetway and the

DC Brit pack will be in attendance, as will the country's top back issue dealers.

Proceeds from the convention's charity auction which includes a Platinum Spider-Man 1, will go to to the London Cartoon Centre Appeal.

For a schedule of events and further information, a stamped, self-addressed envelope should be sent to: UKCAC '91, Dept CI, PO Box 146, Glasgow G1 1TR.

Cartoons, Comics, Caricature

Despite the widely-held acceptance of the comic form as a communication medium rather than a genre, The Wimbledon School of Art is holding a one day conference on cartoons, comics and caricature on Saturday, September 28.

Somewhat akin to attempting to squeeze film, tv and video into a single seminar, the 7 hour conference promises to cover all three forms of art, answering such questions as "How do they work", "Who loves or hates them?" and "Why do people study them?"

While the answer to the final question was possibly given when the School failed to receive enough enrolments to hold the seminar earlier this year, the whole project appears to have been approached with a combination of naivity and ignorance.

Of the six speakers, including a specialist on Soviet politics, Richard Reynolds is the only one who appears to have an involvement in the comics industry; working for a technical publishing house soon to publish his book on superheroes.

The same school also includes a 5-day course "Graphic Novel - design techniques & development" in its current prospectus. While a potential student was told of no outside speakers being involved, a staff lecturer is giving the £190 course which apparently includes making clay models for three dimensional drawing practice.

Ceasefire put on hold

A 48 HOUR STOP was placed on new publisher FANNY's first comic when it came through UK customs on 2nd July, 1991.

Ceasefire (Women Against War) was stopped by Heathrow, where customs officials impounded copies bieng imported from FANNY'S Canadian printer.

FANNY co-editor and director of radical Knockabout Comics Carol Bennett told **Comics International** "It's very peculiar: for some reason the customs seemed to think it was a horror comic!"

The cover of the comic features a woman with a skull in the tv set which replaces her head, the caption reading: 'Readjust Your Sense of Reality', while the inside and back cover signal the comic's intentions and contents clearly.

"I think there was some kind of irony in them finding the subject of the comic 'horrific'" suggested Carol Bennett. "But I hope everything will be alright when they actually understand what it is," she added.

Ceasefire was subsequently released without any further action at the end of the 48-hour intervention. *(Sarah Bolesworth)*

Pacific gets the wave

JULY SAW the launching of the third importer of US comics for distribution to the UK specialist trade, Pacific Comics.

While general newsstand importer-distributors of Marvel and DC comics have been shipping titles across the Atlantic continuously since January 1960, supplies have traditionally been sent by inexpensive sea freight, taking over two momths to reach newsagents' racks.

With the growth in specialist shops and independent publishers in the late 1970s, the sporadic practise of fans and dealers bringing a suitcase of new US titles in to the UK by plane grew into a professional business through Comic Media News Distribution, named after **2000AD** editor Richard Burton's then popular **Comic Media News**.

Quickly changing its name to Titan Distributors, SMND encouraged the growth in comic shops by being able to supply titles often advertised in regular Marvel and DC comics, but never available through newsagents.

With the added advantage of fans being able to jump two issues ahead though comic shops' air freight copies, even distributed title sales began to wane for newsstands.

Now, with Titan celebrating ten years and competitor Neptune Distributors in its fifth, a new alternative has been created.

Pacific's Mike Alculumbre

Pacific has been formed by Mike Alculumbre, bringing to the industry his knowledge of importing and distribution through Pacific Records, and Martin Shipp, who had previously managed Eternal Comic before joining Stateside Comics.

"There seems to be a demand for quality personal service," said Alculumbre. "That's where Pacific fits in."

Steve Robson of Titan commented on the new company: "We welcome it. It's always healthy to have competition."

This was echoed by Neptune spokesman Nigel Mackay who said he was certainly in favour, adding, "Anything to strengthen the position of the market would be welcomed."

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THE BEST TIMES OF OUR LIVES Chapter 1
THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST
WORDS - JAMES ROBINSON · PICTURES - PHIL ELLIOTT

PUBLISHERS of the **Bogie Man** 4-issue series, Glasgow's Fat Man Press is soon to release an ambitious new title, **The Best Times of Our Lives**.

The 80 page complete story tells of a dying alien's encounters with a wide range of humanity, including an Italian London family, the American mafia and Soviet, American and British intelligence.

The story is told with a rarely-seen sensitivity by **Terminator**'s James Robinson with characters -- including the alien visitor -- portrayed far more realistically than in the majority of comics.

Drawn in a deceptively simple European style by Phil Elliott, the artwork never detracts from the tight storytelling, but demands the book is read in a single sitting.

Though Fatman's last project, **The Bogie Man** led to several major publishers bidding for the attractive graphic novel rights, and was optioned for television adaptation, **The Best Times of Our Lives** steps beyond the publisher's impressive start.

This trade paperback sized prestige format title holds immense potential for screen adaptation.

Following the problems with print schedules on **The Bogie Man**, co-publisher John McShane wisely declines to announce the precise release date of his new project.

IN BRIEF

Batman -- without pictures!

Penguin Books is to release the latest **Batman** novel "To Stalk A Specter", by Simon Hawke, this October.

The £3.99 paperback tells of Gotham being held hostage by a deadly assassin, The Specter, and Batman's decision to become the villain's target in an attempt to capture him.

Strip Search 2 at Edinburgh Book Fest

The nationwide tour of *Strip Search 2*, Britain's largest ever exhibition of comics and graphic novels, reaches Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh Book Festival, from August 10 to 26, admission to the Festival being £2 (75p concessions).

To coincide with the exhibition, on Saturday, August 24, curator Paul Gravett will give a free slide show talk on graphic novels at 10.30am at the Central Library, and then host a discussion and signing with Grant Morrison and Dave McKean at 3.00 in the Main Festival Theatre in Charlottle Square Gardens. Admission to this event, which includes an all-day entrance ticket is £3.00 (£1.50 concession).

New Cat book from Knockabout

While this month's release of **Fat Freddy's Cat** 5 & 6 contains material previosuly seen, publishers Knockabout promise Book 7 will be seen later this year with 30 pages of Cat strips which have never before been seen in the English language.

Apparently, the Freak Brothers' feline has an international fame, as France and Spain are now seeing new material before Britain.

Terminator UK

FOLLOWING the success of their **Aliens** monthly reprint title, Trident Comics has just launched a new companion title, **Terminator**, reprinting material from the first Dark Horse min-series.

It launches with a print run of 70,000 and a £1 cover price for 36 full colour pages.

Aliens itself continues to be a strong seller, with the company's Nigel Mackay stating sales continue in excess of 40,000.

No Trouble!

While copies of Fleetway's graphic novel **Troubled Souls** were recalled from UK newsagents last December following complaints, the company has continued with its North American distribution.

The publisher's latest trade sheets list the book as still being available at $9.95.

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SPECIAL EVENTS ON SATURDAY AUGUST 24TH

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● 3.00 PM: A HEATED DEBATE ON GRAPHIC NOVELS WITH GRANT MORRISON AND DAVE MCKEAN IN THE MAIN FESTIVAL THEATRE. TICKETS AT £3.00, CONCESSIONS £1.50, INCLUDE ALL-DAY ADMISSION, BUY THEM FROM: THE FRINGE BOX OFFICE; JAMES THIN, THE EDINBURGH BOOKSHOP; OR BY POST, WITH SAE, FROM: THE FESTIVAL, BOX S, 25A S.W.THISTLE STREET LANE, EDINBURGH EH2 1EW.

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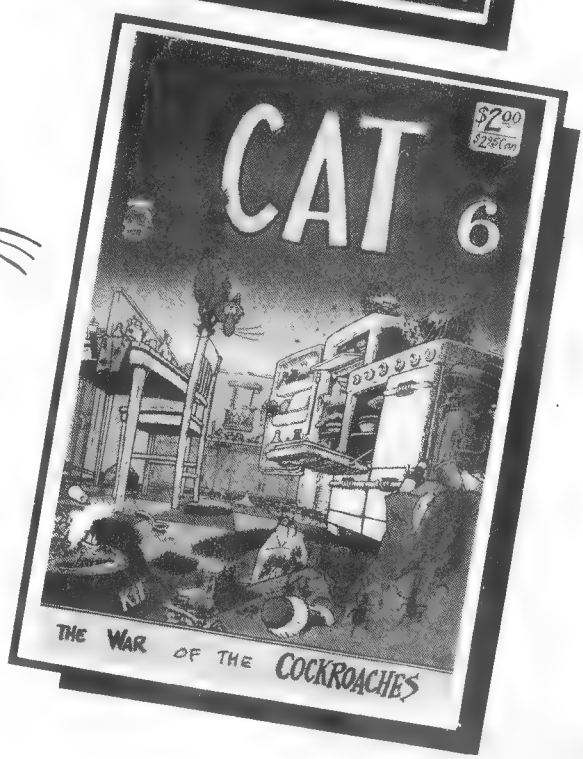

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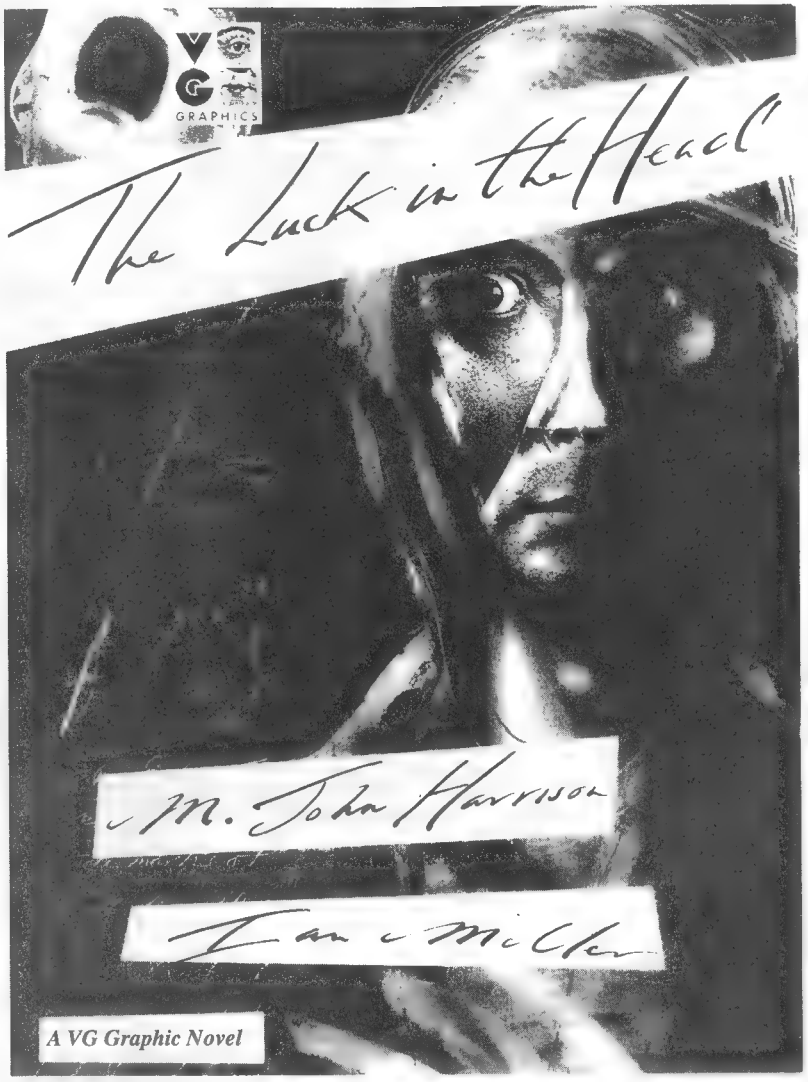

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MEDIA FILE

Associate editor Sarah Bolesworth looks at recent media coverage of comics and related product

CONSTERNATION swept through the comics industry this month as business journalists clearly signalled the feelings on Wall Street were that the parent companies of Marvel and DC are at risk as a result of huge debt burdens accumulated during the 1980s.

The New York Daily News (7.91) charted the rise and fall of cash-cow Marvel Comics, now victim of its own successful marketing. **The Independent on Sunday** (21.7.'91) saw the more immediate consequences for retailers (see report, this issue).

Crisis of confidence

Broadcast (19.7.'91) the UK tv trade magazine noted that Time-Warner (DC's parent company) is facing a severe crisis of confidence following its unsuccessful bid to raise $2.76 billion to combat debts.

The problems both comics publishers have to deal with are a legacy of the buy-out and merger culture of the last five years: they are subject to the machinations of individuals or boards who have no concern for the future of the companies or their product.

This implies that, like in other entertainment media, the creative and commercial future belongs to the small, lean, flexible publisher, co-producing with freelance creators where possible.

Britain's Fleetway, despite its association with the somewhat unsteady Maxwell group (as seen in **The Guardian** report, 17.7.'91) is, like the US Dark Horse, in a good position to be able to grasp the publishing and licensing opportunities coming up in the nineties.

The recent elevation of the company's profile with the announcement of the Dan Dare tv adaptation (see report, this issue) allied to its creative track record points to a potentially hot future for Fleetway. Although it may have suffered the odd intervention from Maxwell or his acolytes, it certainly has not been stripped in the same way as Marvel and DC.

The Maxwells seem convinced at present that it's worth hanging on to Fleetway, if only as a future source of cross-fertilised ideas, or licensing, syndication or merchandising income - for example Simon Bisley's *Judge Dredd* for Maxwell's recently launched magazine for the European market, **Rock Power**.

Vox Popular

Fleetway employees also seem to be taking Maxwell's entrepreneurial philosophies on board. Surely it is the same Peter (ex-**Revolver** editor) Hogan's work to be seen in the pages of IPC's award-winning **Vox**, reviewing **The Many Lives of Batman** - and, yes, the picture for this short piece is taken from the '60s tv series. But as Peter (K.) Hogan says, "there's till plenty of gold in that thar Batcave".

Just hacking it

The conviction that there must be "gold in that thar" comics shop forced Jonathan Ross and Paul (Gambers) Gambaccini out into the horrid glare of publicity when they appeared at their comic shop, Top Ten, for a photo-call with the tabloid hacks.

The Sun, The Sunday People and the **Daily Mirror** turned out dutifully although somewhat dejectedly when they discovered that the shop does not carry **Viz**.

Jonathan and Gambers' happy phizogs above eagerly clutched comics appeared just a few short hours later in Piers Morgan's *Bizarre* column (18.7.'91), in what turned out to be quite an economical way of telling 3.6 million people about their shop. But how many **Sun** readers also buy comics...?

Ross, Ross, and Ross

However yet another Ross, Miles, does not eschew association with **Viz**. Like the two other more or less well-known Ross people, Miles works in telly, production managing for John Brown Publishing Productions (makers of C4's **Billy the Fish** series) as revealed in the **Observer** (21.7.'91).

Attempting to debunk the image created by **Viz**'s "unfeasibly large profits" under the headline "Guffawing all the way to the bank" the publisher told bemused Peter Freedman that he'd always preferred Carry On films to French films, and that his commitment to reinvesting in "four little-known titles" remained firm.

Chris Donald, founder and editor of **Viz** turned in a much more entertaining performance when interviewed in **The Guardian** (12.7.'91). In a puff for the **Viz Presents The Pathetic Sharks Bumper Special** the man responsible for putting the first **Viz** in the pubs of Newcastle obviously had a whale of a time with Martyn ("oh, come on, this must be a wind-up) Wiley.

Winding up Wiley

While admitting that the Pathetic Sharks had been targeted for a much younger audience than **Viz**, in the wake of the TMNTurtles' success, Chris Donald ruefully told Wiley: "There's a deterioration of values throughout society. People like me, scraping a living without full regard to the consequences, are part of that".

Nothing like a bit of self-parody to avoid being the victim of your own publicity.

Mr Extra, on the brink of defeat once more at the hands of Jane(5½) and Tilly(6¾).

MEANWHILE...

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COMMENT

***Comment** is intended to enable fans and professionals alike to express personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry.*

As such, the opinions stated do not necessarily reflect those of the publication, and space will be given in subsequent issues to opposing views. Editing of accepted manuscripts will be done only as a matter of grammar, clarity and space consideration.

2000AD and Toxic: Our weekly weaklings?

Comment by Jim Graham, West Wickham.

IN MARCH, a weekly was launched which seemed to be the most adventurous new British title in recent history, the 99p **Toxic**. At the same time **2000AD** switched to full colour and reduced the price. Yes, you may not have noticed it, but the price went from an extortionate whole 45p to "only" 45p.

At first sight, it looks like **Toxic** might get away with it, having three of the four founding fathers of **2000AD**, in particular Pat Mills, producing plenty of good material.

2000AD's quality is far worse. Normally good writers Pat Mills, Pete Milligan, Mark Millar and John Wagner have, since Prog 723, been producing some of their worst scripts ever. Michael Fleischer is back, like the proverbial bad penny, leaving only Garth Ennis to provide us with decent stories -- proving that he is a grudsend for Judge Dredd. It would seem that **2000AD** is on a losing streak.

However, **Toxic** has problems far more complicated than its rival. It doesn't know whether it should be aimed at an adult market (for creative freedom) or a juvenile one (for sales). As a result, it's very schizophrenic. Like **2000AD** (and most other 1970s/1980s IPC launches), its editor has seen fit to present the comic with a figurehead. Just as **2000AD** has Tharg, **Toxic** has Doc Tox who is written as a psychopath with a fascination for vomit.

All very well, but why does such an unpleasant character never swear? Even the word bastard is taboo. He encourages readers to contribute to the greenhouse effect, but comes across as the sort of psychopath you would feel safe leaving with your mother. The comic is full of pointless (supposedly funny) articles that stopped being funny around issue four.

This sort of stuff is obviously meant for the kiddies, who, according to the cover disclaimer from issue eight onwards, aren't supposed to read it. So why continue?

Toxic also seems keen on that scourge of comicdom, painted artwork. This approach is fine for special graphic albums, where the extra time needed is less of a problem, but for run of the mill weekly stories which make up the bulk of strip material, all it achieves is less pages per week of finished art resulting in shorter episodes. Simple colouring, or even the now unfashionable black and white art can still be very effective and have the advantage of taking far less time to produce. This leads to longer stories, which **Toxic** lacks. But this leads on to a more fundamental problem ...

However bad **2000AD** may be, most stories are in convenient bite-size chunks. As editor Richard Burton pointed out recently, "My prime focus is on a single issue". That, at least, is evident. The stories in **Toxic** are irregular and leave the reader feeling uncomfortable.

But this is not a result of bad writing or even bad editing, it's intentional. Every story that has so far appeared in **Toxic** has been written with the intention of reprinting as 48 or 56 page single story titles.

If, in the case of Marshal Law and the Bogie Man, it means that the script has to be split up into separate "books", so be it. The result is that just as the stories are getting interesting, they stop. Only to return at a later date when you've lost the entire plot thread.

Mutomaniac: Space Cannibals and Bogie Man: The Manhattan Project are two strips that, up to March, were being promoted as one-shot graphic albums but are now first appearing in the weekly. With Bogie Man, they were advertising the one-shot until a week before its serialisation began. Was it their intention to print these stories as graphic albums, but were forced not to by a lack of material for the weekly? Or was it just a way to gain additional coverage?

Now they have begun to stop stories halfway through to make way for new ones, possibly because the artist has not had enough time to complete it. But that cannot be the case with Mutomaniac, which must have been finished to be scheduled for March release as a complete title.

It was foolhardy to launch a weekly when much early material was so far from completion that it had to break part-way through. I would cynically suggest therefore that the real purpose behind this approach is to release those strips in the single-story format before they are completed in the weekly, thus forcing the more impatient among us to buy both versions.

Just in case you thought that it could have all been some ghastly mistake, **Toxic** publishers Apocalypse has now decided to reprint all their strips in a monthly single story format, **Apocalypse Presents**. If they did that after a year or more you could put it down to popular demand, but they started this practice after two months. But as these reprint specials cost £1.50, which page for page is cheaper than **Toxic** itself, you get the freedom not to have to pay for the bad strips to follow the good ones, and the advantage of reading the whole story in a single sitting in a format they were created for.

So is this dual format such a bad thing? Yes it is, because it limits stories to 48 or 64 pages total. Also, at the same time having convenient breaks every six or so pages for episodes in the weekly, but not appearing too jumpy for a single story read. But this means the shorter ones won't fit into the format.

In the case of **2000AD**'s Judge Dredd, some of its best stories have numbered only six to twelve pages. Brief stories like these can be very effective, and a good introduction for new readers.

But for **Toxic**, such an approach may have to be abandoned, not through lack of story ideas, but because the system is too inflexible to allow for them.

In only a few months, Apocalypse's image has changed from an innovative new UK publishing house with the aim of producing a strong weekly comic and a range of one-shot graphic albums into a company producing one-shots while trying to get you to buy the same stories first in a charade of a weekly.

Why? The reason is obvious. Weeklies don't work in America and they want an American market. So screw the British, let them have a poorer product, they'll buy it anyway. Apocalypse only want the weekly to work so they can create work for a wider audience. And if sales drop, **Toxic** will disappear and Apocalypse will blame the British for refusing to buy their "adventurous" new product, while pulling in sales on the reprints.

They might try changing the frequency to a fortnightly or monthly schedule in an attempt to maintain interest, but at the end of the day the single story format is all they care about. **Toxic** is just a good way of making a little extra money out of the same strips first.

Perhaps I am too cynical, indeed I sincerely hope I am. I hope their obvious lack of faith in the weekly is simply a temporary safeguard, so if it fails they can at least recover their losses and adapt. I hope also that they will soon start producing material better suited to the format, as they appear to be doing with one part stories and the recent Marshal Law two-parter. While it would be good to hear their side of the story, it would be better to see the comic improve.

With London Editions and Marvel UK concentrating on reprints, we need something like **Toxic**. If they would only sort out their problems, I am sure that they could be as successful as **2000AD**.

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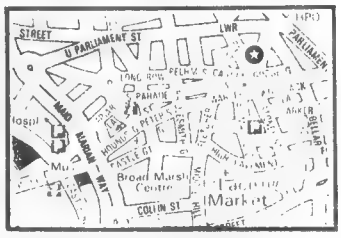

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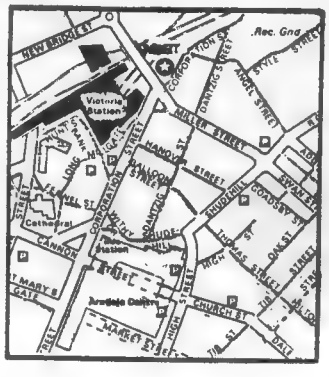

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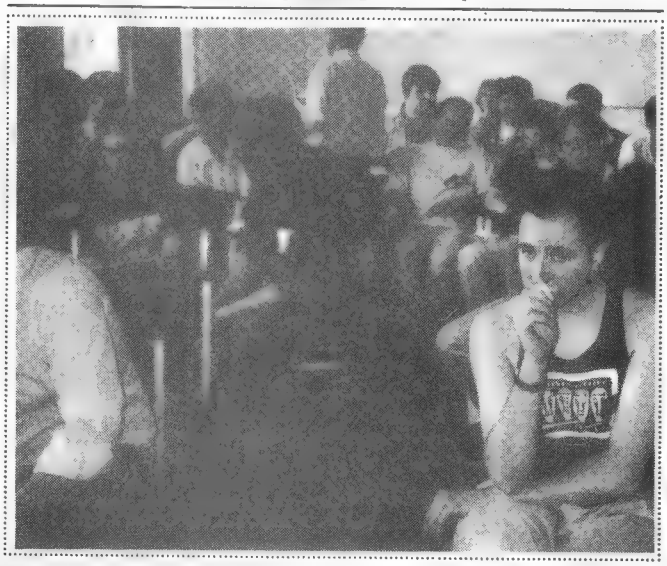
BAR — FOOD — CAR PARK

•••OPENS MIDDAY•••

First UK Comicbook Retailers Meeting

The first independent meeting of comics retailers was held on Sunday 7th July at London's Great Northern Hotel. The meeting was called by Comics International as a response to the growth in numbers of UK retailers and the corresponding increase in questions raised about this rapidly growing industry



MORE THAN forty staff and owners from retailers, publishers, distributors and comic mart organisers attended a meeting in London on 7th July, following a suggestion in **Comics International** that an association might be formed to represent the 200+ specialist retailers now trading in Britain.

On what proved to be one of the hottest Sundays of the summer, despite being the only day off for most of those present, the "tradition" of apathy in the comics industry was broken. Following the formalities of introductions and details of hospitality, the meeting began at 1.30pm, and, after some considerable discussion, the idea of a comicbook retailer's association was put to the vote and unanimously accepted.

The mood was positive and enthusiastic as the meeting, chaired by **Comics International** editor Derek Skinn, moved on to a wide range of points suggested on the agenda.

Main items discussed in the four and a half hour meeting included:

O The advantages of an association in terms of providing a voice for retailers and a forum for discussion of problems. This was thoroughly explored, and it was agreed that a collective base would be one of the prime advantages of such an organisation.

O The question of public relations and advertising, pooling resources and sharing the end product whether generic, corporate, or specifically for the individual, proved of great interest to all present, with several agreeing to the idea of shared advertising and pr campaigns.

O The idea of retailers, through the association, having access to other kinds of professional help (whether group insurance, legal, pr, or

accounting) was aired, with the suggestion that guest speakers could be invited to meetings, including publishers and creators who would directly benefit from talking with the trade. This led into a discussion about publishers' co-op advertising policies and specific traders' success rates when advertising through cinemas, local newspapers, etc.

O When the question of seizure of stock by customs or police was raised, several retailers related their own experiences. Of particular relevance was the input from Tony and Carol Bennett of Knockabout Comics, who revealed some hard and fast rules when faced with the authorities in such situations.

O The problem of stolen stock recovery was seen to be an area which could be tackled very effectively through an association relaying details.

O The mail order protections scheme was discussed, with the intention of improving and standardising trading conditions, and comments were made about the subjectivity of precise grading of mail order stock. The need for an ombudsman was also looked at.

O Both comic marts and importer-distributors answered various queries concerning their roles in the industry, which led into conversation concerning recommended retail pricing policies.

O Considerable discussion took place concerning importing direct from America, and the existing situation regarding returnable unsolds.

O The meeting then moved on to discuss the logistics of creating an organisation, attempting to define the boundaries within which it would operate, adhering to a democratic representation to prevent large retailers taking power, and how it should be financed and administered.

O In order to ensure that such an association is seen to be accessible to all retailers, and that each should have the opportunity to vote in committee members, it was agreed that a working party be formed, which would be responsible for compiling a questionnaire to inform all retailers of the intended formation of an association, and to encourage input from those unable to be present. A team of six was nominated following which both distributors present agreed to provide the chairman of the working party with addresses of their customers to ensure full distribution of information.

Finally it was agreed that the next meeting, at which a committee could be elected, would be at the trade day of UKCAC '91 (Friday, August 30th).

Any retailers (including mail order/ comic mart dealers) who have any comment or contribution to make should contact one of the following members of the working party.

Association working party:

Mike Conroy (Edge of Forver)
Phil Hall (Squonk)
Dave Hodson (White Light)
John McShane (AKA)
Malcolm Phillips (Meanwhile)
and Derek Skinn to chair.

Traders represented: *ACE Comics AKA, Avalon, Atomic Comics, Comicbook Marketplace, Cosmic Fantasy, Edge of Forever, Enigma, Fantasy Inc, Fantazia Magazine, Forbidden Planet (London), Incognito, Just Comics, Knockabout, Komic Kingdom, Meanwhile, Naked Eye Productions, Pacific Distribution, Spaced Out, Squonk, Stateside, Strange Days, Titan Distributors, White Light Books.*

Directly above: The Working party, Dave Hodson (with head down), Malcolm Phillips, Derek Skinn, Mike Conroy, Phil Hall and John McShane.

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Key to abbreviations used:
1 & 2 + 3 = Writer & penciller + inker
***sqbd** = perfect bound; squared spine; without staples*
***RO** = Ronalds print, good white paper*
***b&w** = black & white content*
***hbk** = hardback (book) edition*
***tpbk** = trade paperback, squarebound comicbook sized*
***Xpg** = X number of interior pages*
***V** = violence; **N** = nudity; **S** = sex*

SHIPPING: SEPTEMBER '91

All 32pg colour titles unless stated

AARDVARK

<> **Cerebus 150** (Sim & Gerhard) The "Melmouth" saga continues. b&w $2.25

<> **Cerebus Church & State 15** Reprints **Cerebus** 65. b&w $2.00

<> **Cerebus Church & State 16** Reprints **Cerebus** 66. b&w $2.00

AC COMICS

<> **Femforce 41** (Black & Heike) b&w 44pg $2.75

<> **Miss Victory Golden Anniversary Special** (Black & Heike) Part-colour. 68pg $5.00

<> **Ms Victory 1** (White & Martin, Black & Heike) 36pg $2.00

ADVENTURE

<> **Deathworld Book III 3** (of 4; Holland & Campos) b&w $2.50

<> **Jeremiah: The Hunters 1** (of 2; Hermann) Action in the desert as Jermiah & co. stumble on a hijacking. b&w $2.50

<> **Jeremiah: The Hunters 2** (of 2; Hermann) b&w $2.50

<> **Livingstone Mountain 3** (of 4; Moncuse) b&w $2.50

<> **Logan's World 5** (of 6; Mason & Ulm + Blair) Logan searches the old City for his wife. b&w $2.50

<> **Miss Fury Limited Edition 1** (of 4; Mann & Byrd) Heavy paper reprint edition with gold embossed logo, plus additional unseen art. $4.95

<> **Planet of the Apes 17** (Marshall & Wyman + Pallot) Part 4 of "Countdown Zero". b&w $2.50

<> **Planet of the Apes Annual 1** (Marshall & Tucker, Cravens & Pennington) Featuring characters from the regular title and the **Ape City** mini. No ads. 48pg $3.50

<> **Terror on the Planet of the Apes 4** (of 4; Moench & Ploog) Jason and Alexander escape from the Forbidden Zone. b&w $2.50

AIRCEL

<> **Cat & Mouse 18** (Mann & Byrd) b&w $2.25

<> **Scum of the Earth 2** (of 3; Wilson & Goupil) S, V b&w $2.50

<> **Torment 2** (of 3;) European horror. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

<> **Two Thousand Maniacs 1** (of 3; Herman & Tully) Unwitting Yankees become the main course at a dinner given in their honour. b&w $2.50

A-PLUS

<> **Adventures into the Unknown Halloween Special 1** (Zeck, Larson, Wood, Harrison, Williamson) Anthology horror. b&w 48pg $2.50

<> **Forbidden Worlds 3** (Williamson, Howard, Schaffenberger, Staton, Whitney, Ditko) Anthology ACG sf reprint. b&w $2.50

<> **Herbie 7** (Beck) ACG b & w reprint 48pg $2.50

<> **Hercules 2** (Glanzman) b&w Charlton repr. 48pg $2.50

<> **Kegor, Master of the Deep 1** (of 3; Ditko) Charlton Reprint. b&w 48pg $2.50

<> **Saigon Chronicles 2** (Glanzman, Martinez, Recreo) b&w reprint $2.50

CALIBER

<> **Baker Street Graffiti 1** (Locke) Deductive games. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

<> **Chronic Idiocy 1** (of 3; Cooper) Two brothers in one body. Mature readers. b&w $2.50

<> **Dadaville** (Matusak) Surreal slapstick in suburban US. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

<> **Deadworld 23** (Day & Day) "Graphic" and "tame" cover versions. Mature readers, V. b&w $2.50

<> **Partners in Pandemonium 1** (of 4; Clopper) Demons kicked out of Hell find their way on Earth. Mature readers. b&w $2.50

<> **Planet 29 2** (of 4; Atkinson) b&w $2.50

<> **Quivers 2** (of 2) Mature readers. b&w $2.95

<> **Silencers 3** (of 4; Askwith & Taylor) Mature readers. b&w $2.50

<> **Superswine 1** (Fields) Back after a stint in **Comic Buyer's Guide**. b&w $2.50

<> **Taken Under Special** (Rodier and Lark) Horror reprint from **Caliber Presents**. b&w 40pg $2.95

COMICO

<> **Elementals 22** (Willingham & Leeka + Chen) 'Forever in this Life'. $2.50

<> **Monolith 3** (of 4; Byrd & Mowry + Castle) 'Fugue & Variation' $2.50

<> **Vortex 3** (of 4; Butler & Branch + Mann) 'Coffin Maker'. 32pg $2.50

DARK HORSE

<> **Badlands 3** (of 6; Grant & Giarrano) FBI shenanigans at the JFK assassination. b&w $2.25

<> **Billi 99 1** (of 4; Byam & Sale) 'Pray for us sinners': it's 1999, and the US is in the middle of a second great depression; Billi Chadam regards it as her mission to take on the corrupt world armed with little more than a Toleado sword. Prestige format. b&w 48pg $3.50

<> **Cheval Noir 22** (various) Final chapter of 'The Great Power of the Chninkel' (Rosinski & Van Hamme); 'Rork' (Andreas); 'The Forever War' (Haldeman & Marvano); 'Voyage to Italy (Cosey); 'Angriest Dog in the World' (David Lynch) Mature readers. b&w 80pg $4.50

<> **Dark Horse Presents 54** (Byrne, Miller, Arcudi & Morrow, Geary) Featuring 'The Next Men', 'Sin City', 'Transgression Hotline' b&w $2.25

<> **Deadface: Doing the Islands with Bacchus 3** (of 3; Campbell) Collection of all previous Bacchus appearances. b&w 48pg $2.95

<> **Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis 4** (of 4; Barry) The Nazi threat. $2.50

<> **The Mask 2** (of 4; Arcudi & Mahnke) Masked vigilante runs amok in corrupt city, exacting his own justice on the criminals he finds there. $2.50

<> **Outlanders 33** (Manabe & Lewis + Smith) Finale to Outlanders epic. b&w 40pg $2.50

<> **Predator: Cold War 1** (of 4; Verheiden & Randal + Mitchell) Predators predate in Siberia - and despite Schaefer's contract with NYPD he's called in to deal with them. $2.50

<> **Race of Scorpions 3** (of 4; Duranona) Three desert stories. b&w $2.50

<> **Terminator: Secondary Objectives 3** (of 4; Robinson & Gulacy + Kesel) Dr Hollister designs artificial intelligence for Terminator futures. Mature readers. $2.50

<> **The Venus Wars 6** (Yasuhiko & Gleeson + Smith) High-tech weaponry and 2-ton Hound battlebikes in the streets of Venus. b&w $2.25

DC COMICS

SHIPPING AUGUST 29TH

<> **Kid Eternity 3** (of 3; Morrison & Fegredo) Rescheduled finale. Mature readers. $4.95

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 9TH

<> **Flash 56** (Messner-Loebs & LaRoque + Marzan, Jr.) Wally's enriched by Icicle's will, while all Hell is let loose in a "spooky old mansion". $1.00

<> **The Griffin 1** (of 6; Valdo & Faichie + McKenna) Deconstructed superheroes (shop at K-Mart) and a return to Earth to find dead relatives. $4.95

<> **Deathstroke, The Terminator 4** (Wolfman & Erwin + Blyberg) The Terminator and The Ravager in a no-holds-barred confrontation. $1.75

<> **Hawkworld 17** (Ostrander & G. Nolan) Katar in a running gun-battle through the subways of Chicago. New format. $1.50

<> **Ragman 2** (of 8; Giffen + Fleming & Broderick) Ragman begins to realise the extent of his powers, aided by the enlightenment offered by a rabbi. New format. $1.50

<> **Star Trek 25** (Weinstein & Purcell + Starr) Kirk led into intrigue on an unaligned world as a result of attending a Starfleet officer's reunion. New format. $2.95

<> **Superman: The Man of Steel 5** (L. Simonson & Bogdanove + Swan) Continuing from **Action Comics #670** with an homage to old movie serials and Superman's battle with the Atomic Skull. $1.00

<> **War of the Gods 3** (of 4; Perez + Perez & Braun + Martin) Captain Marvel's secret is revealed to Lobo as the war intensifies, and Wonder Woman is a victim of the attack on Circe's island. Pin-ups of Batman, Captain Marvel, Hawkman and Hawkwoman, Ares and Mars. $1.75

<> **War of the Gods 3** Newsstand version of the above, different cover and no pin-ups. $1.75

<> **The Web 3** (Impact Comics; Strazewski & Artis) The Web moves back in action with an investigation into mysterious superhero sightings. $1:00

<> **Wonder Woman 60** (Perez & J. Thompson + Tanghal) War of the Gods crossover, with the mourning of Wonder Woman's death. $1.00

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 19TH

<> **Batman 471** (Grant & Breyfogle) With Breyfogle assuming full responsibility for artwork, this issue features Batman's battle with Killer Croc in the sewers of Gotham. $1.00

<> **The Demon 17** (War of the

Gods crossover; Grant & Semeiks + Smith) Dead Wonder Woman's spirit is stolen by Klarion the Witch Boy, while Etrigan falls for her whilst he inhabits Jason Blood's body. $1.50

<> **Hellblazer 47** (Ennis & W. Simpson) 'The Pub Where I was Born' tells the story of Constantine's horrific encounter in the Northampton Arms, a haunted London pub. New format. $1.75

<> **The Jaguar 4** (Impact Comics; Messner-Loebs & Williams + Marzan, Jr.) The Black Hood, the latest new hero for Impact Comics, attracts the worrying attention of Jaguar when visiting Elm Harbour University. $1.00

<> **Justice League America 56** (Giffen & DeMatteis + Wozniak + Patterson) "Breakdowns" continues with the JLA's charter being revoked by the United Nations. Continues in this month's **JLE** and **Green Lantern**. $1.00

<> **Justice Society of America 8** (of 8; Strazewski & Miehm + Burchett) Final issue sees the JS confronting Vandal Savage and Soloman Grundy, leaving Starman's life in question. $1.00

<> **Legion of Super-Heroes 24** (Gordon & Giffen, T. & M. Bierbaum, Giffen & Pierson + Gordon.) Conclusion of 'The Quiet Darkness', with Darkseid having captured Aria, and Lobo in final confrontation with Furball (Timberwolf) Deluxe format. $1.75

<> **New Titans 81** (War of the Gods crossover; Wolfman & Swan + Vey) In order to rescue Troia the Titans have to storm Mount Olympus. Deluxe format. $1.75

<> **OMAC 1** (Byrne) Rescheduled. The Kirby created One Man Army Corps with powers conferred by Brother Eye, a satellite, attempts to rid the world of corporate tyranny - while time is hijacked by his nemesis Mr Big. S, N, V. 48pg b&w $3.95

<> **Outlaws 3** (of 8; Friedman & McDonnell) While Hood and co. try to rouse the populace Hood's secret is revealed to the evil King. $1.95

<> **The Question Quarterly 4** (O'Neil & Quesada + various) Myra's being assaulted by The Question is viewed from four different perspectives, with the diverse chapters interpreted by Cowan, Baron, Pensa, Gold, Mignola, Grell and Puckett. New format. 48pg $2.95

<> **Sandman 32** (Gaiman & McManus) New storyline marked by the return of one of the 'Doll's House' characters. Mature readers. $1.50

<> **Sgt. Rock Special 18** (various) Featuring Sgt. Rock by Kanigher and Kubert. 48pg $2.00

<> **Shade, the Changing Man 17** (Milligan & Bachalo + Bryant) Shade faces the American Scream in a Wild Western showdown. Mature readers. $1.50

<> **Superman 61** (Jurgens & Breeding) In the aftermath of 'Armageddon 2001' Waverider is offered a job with the time guards, Linear Men, while Superman encounters the Metal Men. $1.00

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 26TH

<> **Adventures of Superman 484** (Ordway & Grummett + Hazelwood) First of the five-part 'Blackout' story, with Superman and Mr Z losing their memories in Antarctica, and a power interruption in Metropolis. Continues in **Action 671**. $1.00

<> **Animal Man 41** (Veitch & Dillon) 'The Stone that Cracked the Earth Open Like an Egg', in which a renegade division of S.T.A.R Labs have something unpleasant in store for Animal Man, and Buddy learns another aspect of his nature. New format. $1.75

<> **Black Canary 1** (of 4; Byam & Von Eeden + Giordano) In 'Domestic Troubles' Dinah Lance gets involved with the fight against local drug dealers. $1.75

<> **Green Lantern 18** (G.Jones & Staton + Rubenstein) Guy Gardner appearing in this special episode of the Justice League storyline - 'Breakdowns': he runs amok on discovering that the JL has lost its UN status. $1.00

<> **The Legend of the Shield 5** (Impact Comics; Miehm & Waid) The new Shield is honour-bound to defend Dusty, his past character's partner. $1.00

<> **L.E.G.I.O.N. '91 33** (Grant & Kitson) Lobo vows revenge when he discovers one of his pet dolphins has been killed by the Iceman, while reports of brutality threaten the team's future. $1.50

<> **Spelljammer Comics 15** (Kraar & Quesada & Panosian + Magie) Conclusion of the two-part story in which Meredith's son Bors' determination to forswear his relationship with his mother is tested. $1.75

<> **Starman 40** (Strazewski & Calimee + Richardson) Starman fights uneven odds in Las Vegas. $1.00

<> **Star Trek: The Next Generation 25** (Friedman & Krause + Marcos) Quiet and reflective time for the crew is interrupted by an SOS from Okona. New format. $1.75

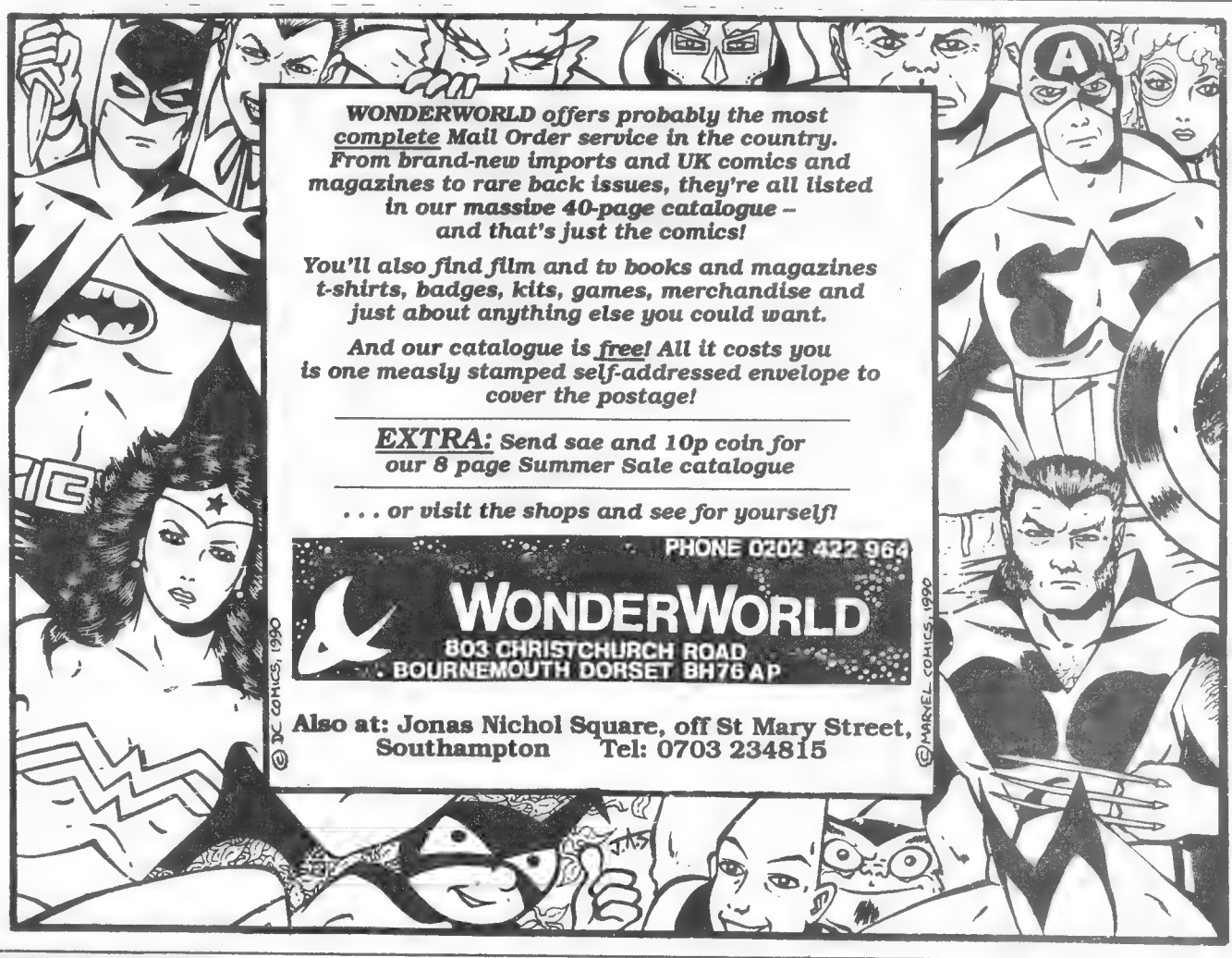
<> **Swamp Thing 113** (Collins & Yeates + Hendrix) Swamp Thing gets drawn into electoral shenanigans. Mature readers. $1.75

SHIPPING OCTOBER 3RD

<> **Action Comics 671** (Stern & McLeod + Rodier) **Adventures of Superman 484**, 'Missing in Action' sees Lex Luthor's son arriving in Metropolis, with ensuign riots and blackouts. Continued in **Superman: The Man of Steel 6**. $1.00

<> **Advanced Dungeons and Dragons 35** (Mishkin & Duursema + Magyar) Conner reveals what he knows of the truth behind his scam, the betrayal of Kyriani and the death of Vajra. Delux format. $1.75

<> **Armageddon: The Alien Agenda 1** (of 4; Armageddon 2001 crossover; Peterson & Jurgens + Ordway) Monarch and a surprise DC hero find themselves alone in the age of dinosaurs. $1.00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<> **The Comet 5** (Impact Comics; Lyle & Waid + Lyle + Hanna) More Frankenstinian nightmares as an unfinished cyborg runs amok. $1.00

<> **Detective Comics 638** (L. Milligan & Aparo + M. DeCarlo) Regualar creative team return with Batman hunting a walking time bomb in Gotham City. $1.00

<> **Doom Patrol 49** (Morrison & Case + Hanna) Mr Nobody escapes from the 'Painting That Ate Paris' and leads the Brotherhood of Dada on an assault on the Doom Patrol. $1.50

<> **The Fly 4** (Impact Comics; Strazewski & Parobeck + Fricke) Through information gathered in the Web organisation the Black Hood coincides with the Fly at Crowns Point, with a battle against the forces of Arachnus set to follow. $1.00

<> **Green Arrow 54** (Grell & Hoberg + Nyberg) Part 2 of 'The List' sees Green Arrow and Fryes exacting revenge on the latter's attackers. $1.50

<> **Justice League Europe 32** (Giffen & G.Jones + Robertson + Beatty) Part 8 of 'Breakdowns' finds both Justice League teams in the old JLA mountain hq. Flash, Elongated Man and Blue Beetle investigate with a member of Doom Patrol making a cameo appearance. $1.00

<> **Legion of Super-Heroes Annual 2** (T. & M. Bierbaum & B. Peterson + Hanna) The second new-style annual features the origin of Valor, and the rebellion on the homeworld of the Dominion Ellia New format. $3.50

<> **The Psycho 3** (Hudnall & Bereton) Jake Reilly finds out who's behind all the persecutions he's been suffering, and acts accordingly. Prestige format. $4.95

<> **The Shadow Strikes! 25** (G. Jones & Whigham + Fernandez) Shadow plus agents go to China to save Margo Lane and stop the megalomaniacal schemes of Shiwan Khan. Deluxe format. $2.00

<> **Suicide Squad 59** (Ostrander & Yale + Isherwood + Campanella) Amanda Waller is under suspicion for the death of the Atom, Ray Palmer; but when Batman, Superman and Aquaman attempt to investigate the Suicide Squad they're faced with the super-villains from Qarac - the Jihad and the Hayoth. $1.25

SHIPPING OCTOBER 10TH

<> **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 24** (Chaykin & Kane) First time Batman scripting by Chaykin begins with the three-part 'Flyer', with the Dark Knight contending with an aerial assassin. New format. $1.75

<> **Doctor Fate 34** (Messner-Loebs & Eaton + Gross) The War of the Gods is over, and Doctor Fate returns to find her neighbourhood conquered by T'Gillian, the forgotten goddess. New format. $1.75

<> **The Human Target Special** (Verheiden & Burchett + Giordano) Moulded in the style of the tv series, and featuring the exploits of Christopher Chance and his private stealth 'plane. 48pg $2.00

<> **Sandman Special 1** (Gaiman & Talbot + Buckingham) "Glow in the dark cover" telling the story of Sandman's only child, Orpheus, who went to Hades to bring back his deceased wife. Also featuring the entire Endless family, seen for the first time. $3.50

<> **War of the Gods 4** (of 4; Perez and Perez & Braun) The super-heroes gather to take revenge on Circe in New Olympus, with all creation at risk, and Captain Marvel's secret about to be revealed. Available in Direct and Newsstand editions. $1.75

<> **Who's Who in the DC Universe 14** (various) Spotlighting the new Titans' Wildebeeste and Parasa (Grummett & Vey); the New Teen Titans (Gammill) and Nightwing (Garcia Lopez). Also including Anarky (Breyfogle); Forever People (Adams); Valor (Hughes); Animal Man (Bolland); Green Arrow (Grell). Loose-leaf format. $4.95

ECLIPSE

<> **Robin Hood 3** (of 3; Jones & Truman + Schenck) Conclusion of the Robin Hood legend, with King Richard and the Sheriff of Nottingham conspire to murder Robin and Marion. $2.50

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<> **Captain Confederacy 1** (of 4; Shetterly & Stone) Story of what would have happened if the South had succeeded during the Civil War, in 'Hero Worship', with Captain Confederacy as a pregnant black woman squaring up against the North's superheroes. $1.95

<> **Epic Light** (various) One-shot humour anthology. Mature readers. $3.95

<> **Groo the Wanderer 83** (Aragones w/Evanier) Conclusion of the 4-part "Legend of Thalis". $1.00

<> **Hellraiser: Book of the Damned 1** (Wachowski & various) Visually real diary of a reporter sucked into the Hellraiser vortex when investigating some bizarre disappearances. $4.95

<> **Metropol 9** (McKeever & Mignola) 1. 'Wings of Silence' - Enoch, Sarakeil and the other Angels are forced underground; 2. 'A Thunder Like Drumming' (Part 1 of 3) featuring Eddy Current. Mature readers. $2.95

<> **Nightbreed 12** (Chichester & Nelson) Humans and Nightbreeds turn against each other in bloody finale of two-part story. $2.25

<> **Sleeze Brothers 1** (Carnel & Lanning + Baskerville) Whacky cross-dressers get into life or death plays when dealing pure air as a drug. $3.95

ETERNITY

< > **Blood Junkies 2** (of 2; Finley & Hagan) Vampires and the Justice Department. b&w $2.50

<> **Bronx 3** (of 3) Mature readers. b&w $2.50

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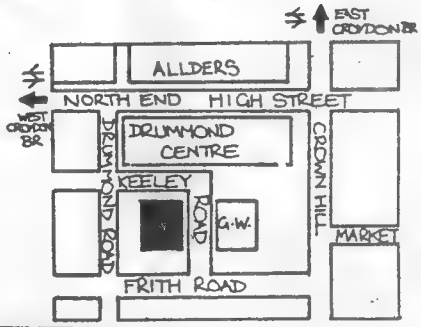

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<> **Dollman 1** (of 4; Spangler & Campos) Sequel to the film, with the 13"-high detective from the planet Arturos.
<> **Ghosts of Dracula 1** (of 5; Powell & Makinen) Dracula and Houdini confrontation. b&w $2.50
<> **Killing Stroke 4** (of 4; various) UK horror anthology. b&w $2.50
<> **The Mantus Files 2** (of 4; Williams & Giles + Schaefer) Arcane investigator Peter Mantus in New Orleans. b&w $2.50
<> **Ninja High School 29** (Dunn) Super-computer runs amok, threatening Earth. b&w $2.25
<> **Rio Kid 1** (of 3; Albian & Saichann) Part detective, part mercenary the Rio Kid "never fails to finish first". b&w $2.50
<> **Robotech II: The Sentinels Book II 9** (Mason & Ulm + Waltrip) Rick Hunter's crack team battle on the planet of Karbarra. $2.25
<> **Robotech II: The Sentinels Illustrated Handbook 3** (of 3) Official source bk. b&w 32pg $2.50
<> **Shuriken 4** (of 6; Bennett & Abbott) b&w $2.50
<> **Trancers Prestige Edition 1** (Bennett & Cordiello) Collects the 2-issue miniseries, in which time traveller Jack Deth delves into the Earth's present to ensure its future. $4.95

FANTACO

<> **Night's Children 4** (of 4; Wendy Snow-Lang) $3.50
<> **Night of the Living Dead 1** (of 4; Skulan & Stanway + Kastro) Hardcore adaptation of the George A. Romero and John Russo film. Prestige format. 48pg $4.95

FANTAGRAPHICS

<> **Eightball 3** (Clowes) Second printing of the seven Harvey Award-winning comic. Mature readers. b&w $2.50
<> **Jizz 7** (Russo) Mature readers. b&w $2.50
<> **Love & Rockets 9** (Hernandez bros.) Reprint. Mature readers. b&w $2.50
<> **Usagi Yojimbo 31** (Stan Sakai, Scott Shaw and Jim Engel) Conclusion of the 'Circles' epic. b&w $2.25
<> **Yahoo 5** (Sacco) Rescheduled. Mature readers. b&w $2.50

HARVEY

<> **Baby Huey 2** $1.00
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<> **Tom & Jerry 3** $1.25
<> **Woody Woodpecker 3** $1.25

INNOVATION

<> **Angry Shadows 1** (various) New horror anthology edited by Faye Perozich. Mature readers. b&w $4.95
<> **Child's Play 3 #2** (Mangels & McKinney + Oeming) Military school. Mature readers. $2.50
<> **Child's Play 3 #3** (Mangels & McKinney + Oeming) $2.50
<> **Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare 1** (of 3; Mangels & Witherby + Kaalberg) Published to coincide with the forthcoming film. Mature readers. $2.50
<> **Interview with the Vampire 2** (of 12; Wood & Phillips) Continuing adaptation of the Anne Rice best-seller. Mature readers. $2.50
<> **Lost in Space 5** (Broderick + Mumy & Moeller + Thompson) 2.50
<> **Nightmares on Elm Street 4** (Mangels & Harris) 'Loose Ends; Part Two: Dead Men Telling Tales'. Mature readers. $2.50
<> **Psycho 1** (Thompson & Echevarria) Authorised adaptation of the Hitchcock classic. $2.50

JADEMAN COMICS

<> **Blood Sword 39** $1.95
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<> **Drunken Fist 39** $1.95
<> **Force of Buddha's Palm 39** $1.95
<> **Iron Marshal 16** $1.75
<> **Oriental Heroes 39** $1.95

KITCHEN SINK

<> **Grateful Dead Comics 2** (various) Interpretations of the band's material in comic format. $4.95
<> **Spirit 83** (Eisner) Reprint of the 1950s classics. b&w $2.00

MARVEL COMICS

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 3RD

<> **Avengers West Coast 76** (R. Thomas & Ross + Dzon) First of 4-issue story featuring Night Shift and the introduction of Man-Demon. $1.00
<> **Captain America 394** (Gruenwald & Lim + Bulanadi) First of 4-part story in which relationships between The Red Skull, Viper, Cap and Diamondback are examined. $1.00
<> **Daredevil 298** (Chichester & Weeks + Williamson) With Nick Fury guesting, who, despite Daredevil's intervention, gleans informationa about Baron Strucker and Hydra. $1.00
<> **Darkhawk 9** (Fingeroth & Manley + Villagran) Darkhawk and the Punisher form an alliance to take on Savage Steel. $1.00
<> **Eternals: Herod Factor 1** (Thomas & Texiera + McLeod) An ancient Olympian philosophy comes true on Earth when teenage twins are murdered, supposedly signalling the demise of the Eternals. $2.50
<> **Excalibur 43** (Davis & Farmer) Part 2 of a 6-issue run, with Nightcrawler and Captain Britain dispute over Megan and the Technet attempting to rebuild Excalibur's headquarters. $1.75
<> **Legion of Night 1** (of 2; Gerber & Portacio + Williams) The Fellowship is a cult determined to wake the sleeping dragon Fin Fang Foom: Charles Black is murdered

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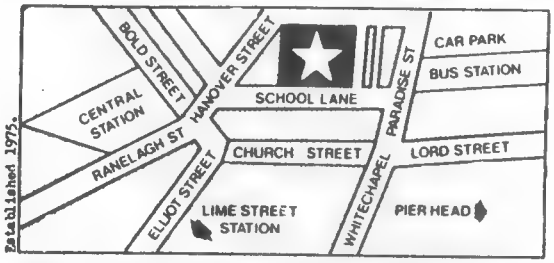

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when he discovers The Fellowship's intentions; his body becomes the vessel for Legion, whose sole aim is to prevent the dragon's awakening. $4.95

<> **Marvel Comics Presents 88** **Wolverine** (part 4 of 8; David & Keith) Cyber pits Madripoor's forces against each other as Wolverine battles for his own sanity. **Beast** (part 4 of 8; Lobdel & Lee + Dzon) Beast encounters the Red Ghost as he reintroduces the super-apes. **Solo** (Fein & Runyan) Solo fights terrorist hero Tarantula. **Volcana** (Brock & Wiacek) Volcana fights the Frightful 4's Wizard. $1.25

<> **Namor the Sub-Mariner 20** (Byrne) Misty Knight and Colleen Wing's quest for Iron Fist begins with them unravelling Danny Rand's fate, while Namorita's psyche's dysfunctional following the realisation that she's a clone. $1.00

<> **NFL Superpro 2** (Nicieza & Delbo + DeCarlo) Football and assassination. $2.00

<> **Pirates of Dark Waters 1** (of 6; Zimmerman & Dick) Swashbuckling environmental pirate adventure series published to coincide with the new Hanna-Barbera tv cartoon show. $1.00

<> **Punisher 54** (Baron & Haynes + Palmiotti) Part 2 of 7, in which the choice of making good his escape or killing policemen is the dilemma for Frank. $2.50

<> **She-Hulk 33** (Byrne & Williams) Conclusion of the 'Jenny to the centre of the Earth' storyline, where She-Hulk has to trade marriage for help to defeat Spragg. $1.50

<> **Uncanny X-Men 282** (Claremont & Portacio + Thibert) Escalation of the Hellfire Club's course to destruction. $1.00

<> **Web of Spider-Man 82** (Busiek & Wilson + Hudson) Spider-Man in confrontation with Man Mountain Marko. $1.00

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 12TH

<> **Alf 47** (Gallagher & Manak + Haller + Severin) Part 1 of 4, leading to issue #50, 'Meteor Bye-Products' tells the story of Alf's journey to Arizona to find an extra-terrestrial material to power up his spaceship. $1.00

<> **Alpha Flight 102** (Lobdell & Morgan + Ivy) Diablo's pursued by the team in Central America, Aurora turns up and Weapon Omega is introduced. $1.50

<> **Amazing Spider-Man 353** (Milgrom & Bagley + Emberlin) Part 1 of the 6-part 'Round Robin: Revenge of the Sidekick' storyline focusing on Midnight, Moon Knight's ex-partner, now cyborg enemy. $1.00

<> **Barbie 11** (Robbins & Wilshire) Pre-Halloween issue. $1.00

<> **Ghost Rider 19** (Mackie & Texiera) Mephisto creates the unwilling superhero - a man who wants to commit suicide - but can't do it until he's saved the lives of the people he hates. $1.75

<> **Original Ghost Rider Rides Again 5** (of 7; DeMatteis & Perlin & Budinasky & Simons + Dzuban) Reprinted from **Ghost Rider 76 & 77**, Johnny Blaze and GR battle in the Netherworld. $1.75

<> **Quasar 28** (Grunewald & Capullo + Williams) Moondragon fears a rival for Quasar's affections while Her runs a contest among Marvel's superheroes to find our who will be the recipient of her affections. $1.00

<> **Savage Sword of Conan 91** (Thomas & Buscema + Chan) War between Thulsa Doom and Thoth-Amon continues in the 4-part 'Skull on the Seas' storyline. $2.25

<> **Silver Surfer 58** (Infinity Gauntlet crossover; Marz & Lim + Christopher) The old Defenders (the Hulk, Sub-Mariner and Dr Strange) guest-star in a story designed to resolve the emotional conflicts released by Thanos in issue Silver Surfer 50. $1.00

<> **Sleepwalker 6** (Infinity Gauntlet crossover; Budansky & Blevins) First of three-part Gauntlet crossover and continuation of the Spider-Man guest appearance storyline. $1.00

<> **Thor 438** (DeFalco & Frenz + Sinnott) Dargo, the future Thor, comes back to the present to search, like Eric Masterton, for the real Thor. $1.00

<> **Tomb of Dracula 1** (of 4; Wolfman & Colan + Williamson) New 4-issue miniseries. Mature readers. $4.95

<> **Toxic Avenger 8** (Moench & Mayerick) 'Sewer of Souviaki' epic concludes with the victims conglomerating into one giant monster with the sole desire of consuming New York. $1.50

<> **Wolverine 48** (Hama & Silvestri + Green) Logan, in exploring Sabretooth's obsession with Silverfox, discovers shocking secrets in his own past. $1.75

<> **Wonder Man 3** (G.Jones & Johnson) While Wondy's stuck with a sidekick he doesn't want the Abominatrix is on the razz in Hollywood trashing "the Cult of Beauty" $1.00

<> **Zorro 12** (of 12; Rimmer & Taylor + Fawcett) 'It's a Wonderful Life' tells the story of an angel revealing to Zorro what life would be like without him. $1.00

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 19TH

<> **Avengers 341** (Nicieza & Levins + Palmer) 'Sons of the Serpent' saga concludes, with the Serpent leading the Avengers into trouble in Harlem. $1.00

<> **Bill & Ted's Comic Book 2** (Dorkin & DeStefano) Death takes a vacation and leaves the excellent two to deal with the undead. $1.00

<> **Conan the Barbarian 250** (Thomas & Docherty + Talaoc) Milestone 250th issue sees Red Sonja and Zulu guesting as Conan et al go after a treasure, facing Zug and his army of Zugites. $1.50

<> **Double Dragon 5** (of 6; McDuffie & Raney + Vancata) Having defeated the live manifestation of the Dragon Force the Lee brothers attempt to sabotage Stealth's plans for Oligopolis. $1.00

<> **Excalibur 44** (Davis & Farmer) Part 3 of the 6-part series sees all

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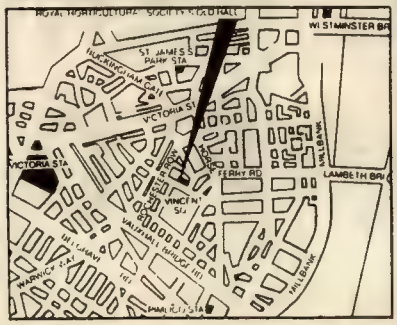

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<> **Fantastic Four Reprint 1** (of 6; Lee & Kirby) In celebration of the 30th anniversary of its realease, including all the ads and text pages of the original. $2.95

<> **G.I. Joe 118** (Hama & Whigham + Emberlin) 'Destro: Search and Destroy'(part 3 of 3). Final solution for the Destro/Cobra Commander battle. $1.00

<> **Guardians of the Galaxy 18** (Valentino & Montano) Part 2 of 4-parter in which the Guardians face the 31st Century Punishers. $1.00

<> **Incredible Hulk 387** (David & Keown + Farmer) 'Little Hitler' storyline concludes with the Hulk faced with the dilemma of the survial of the next Hitler. $1.00

<> **Infinity Gauntlet 5** (of 6; Starlin & Perez + Rubenstein) Thanos' battle with the gods threatens to destroy the remains of the universe. $2.50

<> **Knights of Pendragon 16** (Abnett + Tomlinson & Erskine + Georgiou) With Black Panther guesting, and the Pendragons scattered, adventuring, across the globe. $1.95

<> **Marvel Age 106** Preview of **Man-Thing**, the **American Tale** adaptation, plus all the usual news, reviews and coloumns. $1.00

<> **Marvel Comics Presents 89** **Wolverine** (part 5 of 8; David & Keith) Cyber's plan succeeds; **Beast** (part 5 of 8; Lobdel & Lee) Battle royal between the Beast, the Constrictor, the Super-Apes and the Wereborgs; **Spitfire** (Slott & Fagiani) Selene kidnaps Spitfire's son and wants to trade him for his rejuvenation secret; **Mojo** (Slott & Cockrum) Guesting the X-Men with Mojo unsuccessfully trying to make a documentary about them. $1.25

<> **Marvel Tales 255** (Claremont & Buscema + Marcos) Part 2 of the 3-part Ghost Rider story. Reprinted from **Marvel Team-Up 58**. $1.00

<> **Punisher 55** (Baron & Haynes + Palmiotti) Part 3 of the 7-part storyline, with the Punisher sold down the river by his lawyer, and winding up in gaol, all thanks to the Kingpin. $1.00

<> **Robocop 21** (Furman & Sullivan) Part 1 of the 3-part 'Beyond the Law' storyline, which sees Robo's family kidnapped by terrorists: and the only way he can save them is by breaking the law. $1.50

<> **SHIELD 29** (Chichester & Stiner + Hudson) Finale of the 3-part Wolverine saga, in which Hydra makes a desperate attempt to recover an icebreaker. $1.50

<> **Spider-Man 16** (McFarlane) Part 1 of the 2-part 'Sabotage' crossover with X-Force guesting, pitting Spider-Man and Cable & Co. against Black Tom Cassidy and the Juggernaut, blowing up the World Trade Centre in the process. Concluded in **X-Force 4**. $1.75

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SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 26TH

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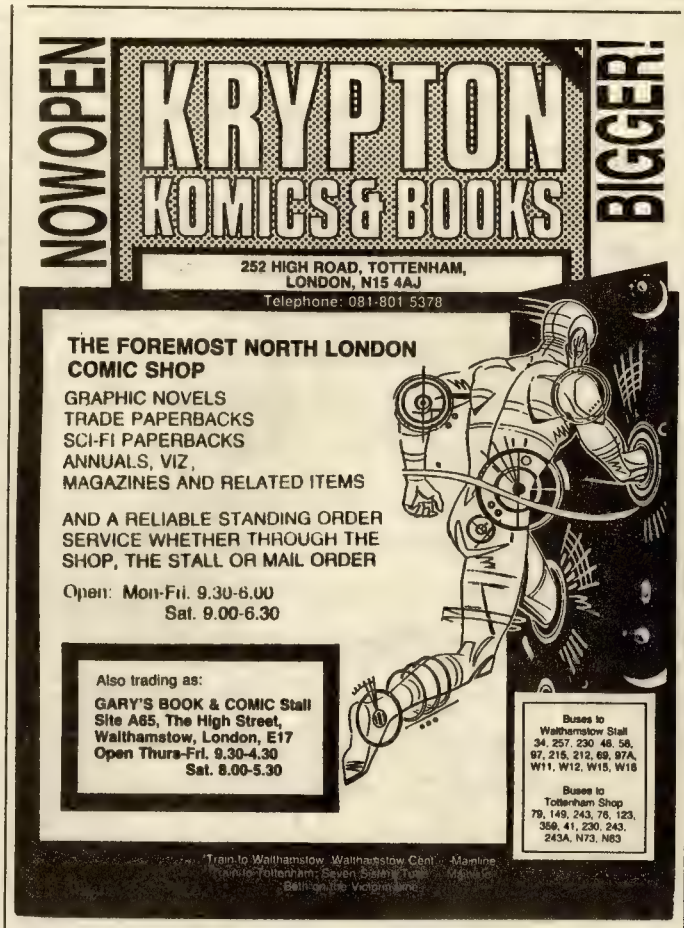
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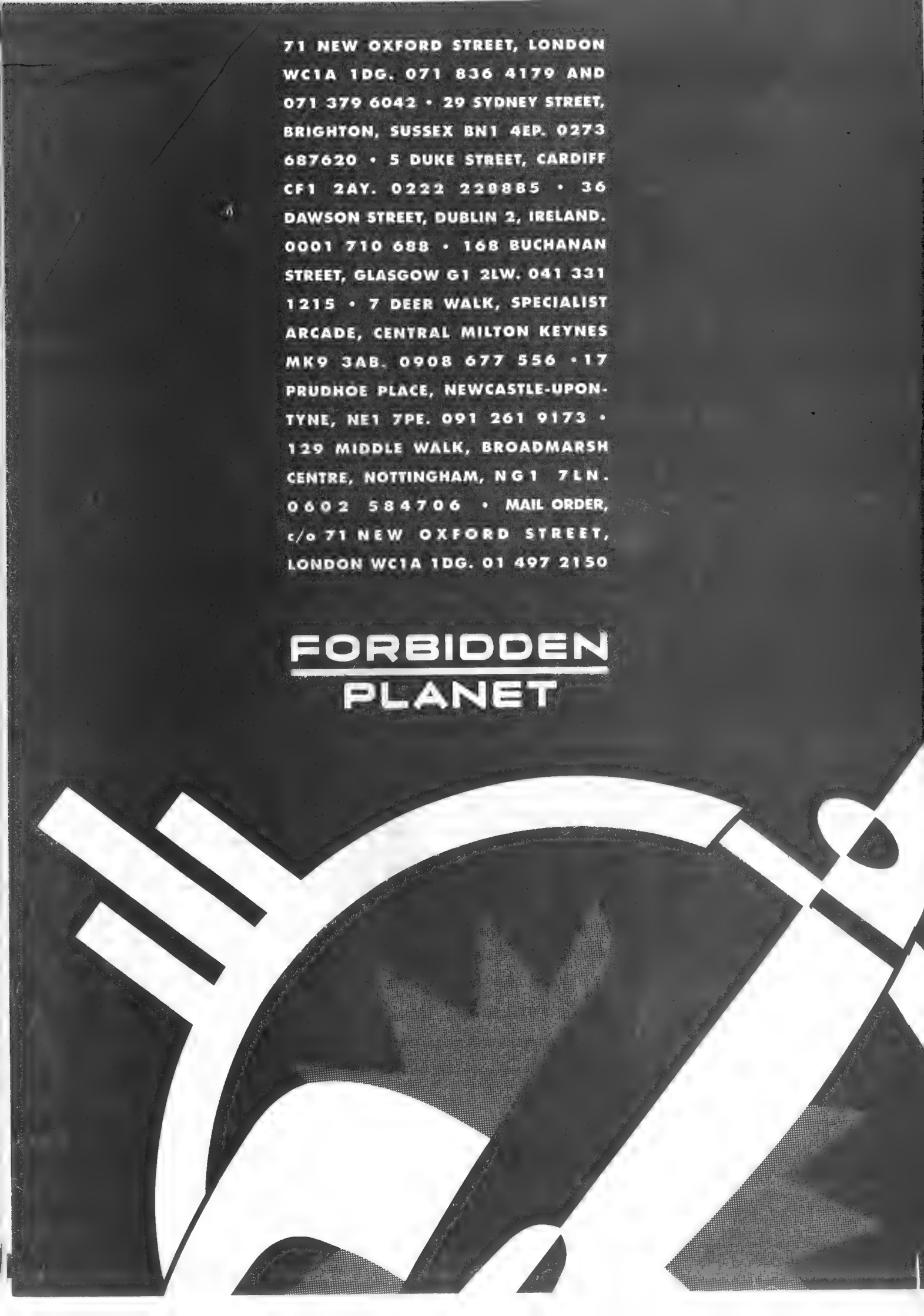

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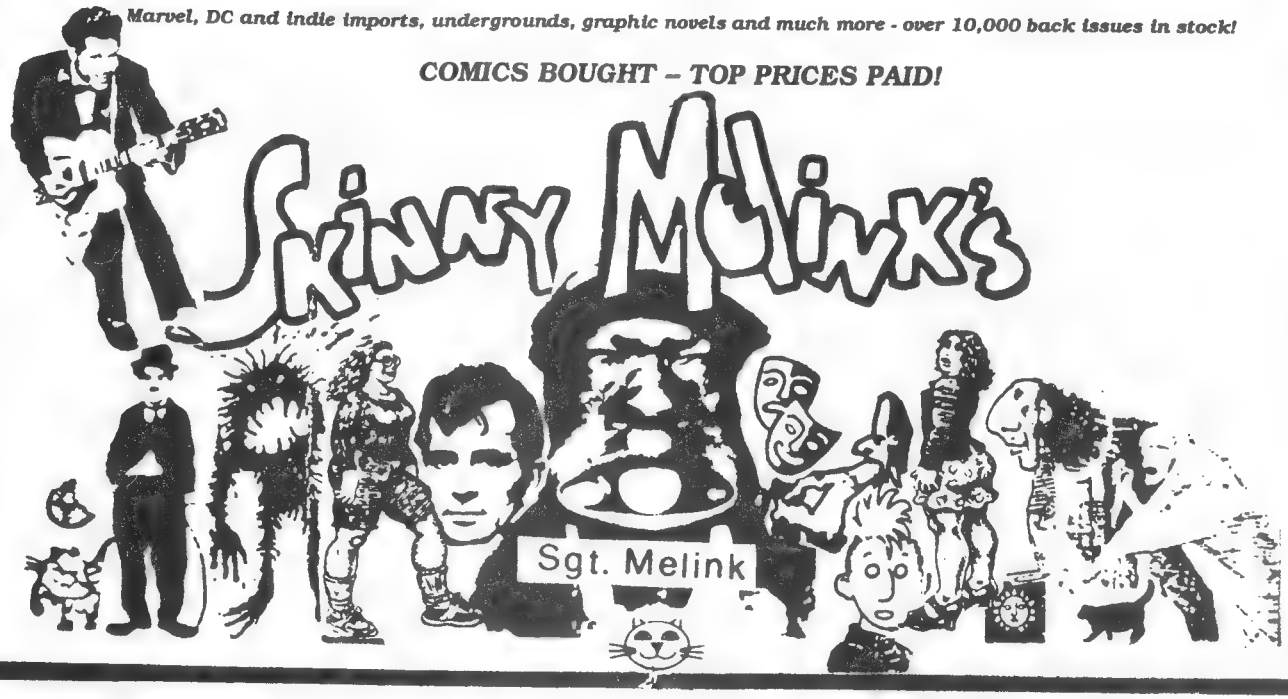

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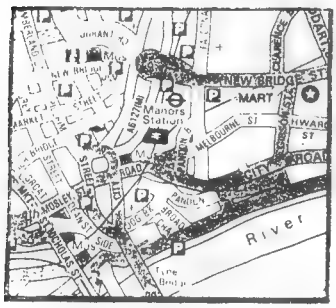

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The individual issue is also rated within the confines of its previous issues. Hence a comparatively dull title may get a low number, but a high rating for the specific issue reviewed (ranging from - through to +++) if it has suddenly improved and is worth a look.

Reviewing panel: Ahmet Ali, Sarah Bolesworth, Les Chester, Jason Cobley, Jonathan Farmer, Steven Fountain, Phil Hall, Peter Hayward-Brewer, Danny King, Skinny Melink, John Morell, Peter C. Phillips, Derek G. Skinn and Alan Woollcombe

DC COMICS

ACTION COMICS 667 <+> (Stern & various) Eradicator eradicated. Supes plays his part but it's Professor Hamilton who steals the show. (PCP) **9**

<+> A 48-page free-for-all, in which the Man from Krypton finally has it out with the Krypton Man and every current Superman artist draws a page or two. With subplots aplenty and genuine character and plot developments, the Superman titles are still the most consistently readable mainstream superhero soap fodder. (AW) **6**

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN 480 (Ordway & various) Superman and the Eradicator duke it out with the Sun and Mercury as deadly backdrops. So much action and sub-plot development it takes your breath away. (PCP) **9**

<-> Another jumbo jam session with all the current Super-crew pitching in. Meantime, the Krypton Man is remodelling the Earth in between periodically flinging Supes into the Sun. Where's Jimmy Olsen's signal watch when you need it? (AW) **6**

BATMAN 465 <+> (Grant & Breyfogle + Mitchell) A knock-down drag-out fight of some intensity between Batman and an Indian Shaman brings a satisfying conclusion to the Dark Knight's Wild West adventure. The new Bat-Hound becomes an official member of the Batman canon. (PCP) **9**

BATMAN 466 <+> (Grant & Breyfogle + Mitchell) Gangsters seek refuge in fun fair also occupied by kid sniper seeking revenge on street punks. Batman and Robin resolve both problems in spectacular style. The creative team is now really in touch with the characters - and it shows. (PCP) **9**

BATMAN: FULL CIRCLE (Barr & Davis) Batman must bring out the best in people, and while this sequel to the dismal **Year Two** is a tad heavy on the cliches, it's still a fairly exciting and engrossing yarn, 'though maybe it's about time they put Batman's troubled past to rest for a while. Much of the success here can be attributed to Alan Davis's exceptionally strong, lively and dramatic pencils, with sizeable contributions as well from inker Mark Farmer and colourist Tom Ziuko. (SM) **8**

Barr provides one or two interesting moments in this - which is one or two more than usual! No, just bask in the beautiful artwork in this book. Farmer's excellent inking highlihgts Davis' impressive pencils and the rating is for them only. (JF) **9**

CAPTAIN ATOM 54 <-> (Ostrander & M. Adams + Tanghal) Cap enters the Quantum Field and creates his own perfect world. Ho-hum! (PCP) **2**

COMET 1 (Lyle + Waid & Lyle) First issue that gives no origin details but is so jam-packed full of mystery and suspense it doesn't matter. A mean debut guarenteed to draw readers back for the next issue. (PCP) **9**

A nice enough start, 'though Waid is little more than a standard Marvel-type house artist - in fact, this comic has the look of a Marvel, and hero Rob Conners has a look of Peter Parker! As a debut issue, however, it's much more engaging than recent Marvel efforts like **Sleepwalker**. (SM) **7**

So, the Impact era has begun! It started well with **The Legend of the Shield**, and improves with the first issue of this line. Reading not unlike the early **Starman** issues, it introduces Rob Conners and his girlfriend Victoria and sets his new super-hero identity up against an intriguing foe, Applejack. A good strong beginning. (PHB) **8**

DETECTIVE 631 <-> (Milligan & Aparo + DeCarlo) Holocaust survivor creates a Golem to fight street punks but finds he can't control it. Script and visuals kill any reader interest. (PCP) **2**

DETECTIVE 632 <-> (Milligan & Aparo + DeCarlo) Part two of Batman's battle against the Golem. Second-rate drivel. (PCP) **2**

DETECTIVE 633 <-+> (Milligan & Mandrake) For once, a passable mystery that has Bruce Wayne seekin to prove he's really Batman both to himself and those normally in the know but with all the evidence stacked against him. Nothing is what it seems... or is it? (PCP) **8**

DETECTIVE 634 <-> (Puckett & McDonnell) The first of the unfortunate fill-in issues that allow the title to go bi-weekly. Two interfering biddies get involved in international espionage. Not bad, though, with good art and an amazing George Pratt cover. Shame to lose Milligan, however. (JF) **6**

DEATHSTROKE THE TERMINATOR 1 (Wolfman & Erwin + Blyberg) The last major spin-off from the Titans (Vigilante) dies a death having spent its entire run battling against a distinct lack of direction. Deathstroke should fare much better as both he and his supporting cast have already had the better part of a decade to build up a following, and this first issue certainly begins with a bang and all the necessary ingredients of mystery and intrigue as Slade is drawn into a deadly game supposedly engineered by his dead son - The Ravager. (PCP) **9**

The title character is a Slade Wilson, James Bond type, who used to harass the Teen Titans (currently busy fighting his son, Jericho). Meanwhile, his other son's appparently come back from the dead to make his life miserable. All right action/intrigue yarn, with some potentially strong characters. (SM) **7**

Contrary to the **Punisher**-type fodder the Mike Zeck cover seems to suggest, this comic is an intelligent book which works on many different levels. I feared that Deathstroke would be needlessly revamped for his own title, but in the safe hands of writer Mary Wolfman the character's portrayal is consistent with his New Titans appearances. (AA) **7**

DOOM PATROL 44 <-> (Morrison & Giarrano) Merely a clever concept stretched thin to fill out an entire issue. Morrison seems to have lost all perspective as to what makes an interesting read. There's no point in weirdness for its own sake, which is pretty much all this comic has been recently. (SM) **5**

DOOM PATROL 46 <+> (Morrison & Case + McKenna) Reminiscent of earlier Morrison issues, strange things are afoot but no one sees any connections, yet. It's hard to imagine any other team doing all this. (JF) **8**

DRAGONLANCE 32 <+> (Blaustein & Randall + Elliot) Riva wins the right to become a Solamnic Knight in the final episode of the "Sword of Kinslayer" trilogy. Without doubt the best storyline this series has seen. (PCP) **9**

DR FATE 29 & 30 <+ -> (Messner-Loebs and Giarrano + Gross) A nice alternative to the usual superhero fare - while Superman's out saving the universe, and Batman squares off against some arch nemesis like the Joker, the new Dr Fate mends broken traffic lights and fixes wrecked cars. As inked by Gross, Giarrano's clean pencils make for a strong page, and are preferable to Gross on his own. This is fine stuff, and one hope that the previously erratic Messner-loebs can maintain the high quality. (SM) **9**

FLASH 52 <+-> (Messner-Loebs & Laroque + Marzan) Forced into joining the Revenue Service, Flash goes after a tax-dodger who just happens to have demonic powers. Who would have guessed? (PCP) **4**

FLASH 53 <+-> (Messner-Loebs & Laroque + Marzan) Deranged ex-CIA agent kidnaps Jimmy Olsen and demands that Superman delivers up a supposedly dead South American dictator. For reasons not fully explained, Supes calls in the Flash to undertake the search for the dictator while he investigates the background of the kidnapper. An average story but which does uncover unknown facts about the Pied Piper's sexual preferences. (PCP) **6**

GREEN ARROW 49 <+ -> (Grell & Hoberg) Ollie's wanderings have taken him all the way to Africa, but the real interest is what's happening back in Seattle with Dinah and her friends. Hoberg is an improvement over Cowan, 'though he might have to loosen up a bit. (SM) **7**

GREEN ARROW 50 <+> (Grell-& Nyberg) The old terrorists-take-building-hostage-and-the-hero's-lady-is-inside storyline, but well told and with an extra twist or two to keep it fresh. Still, after 50 issues, this comic works best when Grell narrows his focus to individual people rather than when trying to be a topical John Milius. (SM) **8**

GREEN LANTERN 14 <+> (Jones & Bright) True to its recent tradition of not knowing who the star of this book should be, DC have now adopted a policy of rotating leads. After several issues featuring the odious Guy Gardner and G'Nort it's now the turn of John Stewart (Black Lantern). Trouble is brewing on the mosaic planet cobbled together by the renegade Guardian from Hal Jordan's old haunts and the other Guardians refuse to help John out...(AW) **5**

GREEN LANTERN 15 <+ -> (Jones & Bright) Mosaic part 2: war breaks out among the alien neighbours on the mosaic planet. Writer Jones is exploring some of the same territory as Denny O'Neill did twenty years ago in the classic Green Lantern /Green Arrow team-ups, and Mark Bright does a credible Adams-meets-Aparo impression. (AW) **5**

GREEN LANTERN: EMERALD DAWN II 4 <+ -> (Giffen and Jones & Bright) Continuing the masterly reweaving of the origin of one of DC's earliest heroes, trainee Hal begins to suspect instructor Sinestro's motives. This mini-series has coped admirably so far with blending the "old" Hal Jordan/GL origin with more recent developments in the Lantern mythos. (AW) **7**

HAWK & DOVE 25 <- +> (Kesel & various) Hawk crosses the line in trying to revive his dead brother. Pleasing script that cleverly ties in the grown-up sans powers Hank & Don Hall story from Brave & Bold 181. Worth it for the guest artists alone. (PCP) **8**

HAWK & DOVE 26 <- -> (B. Kesel & Grindberg + Hanna & Guler + Hanna) Origin recap issue oddly timed coming as it does smack dab in the middle of Hawk's attempts to revive the original Dove and two issues before the book's demise. As such, all rather pointless. (PCP) **4**

HELLBLAZER 43 <+ -> (Ennis & Simpson) Whoever told colourist

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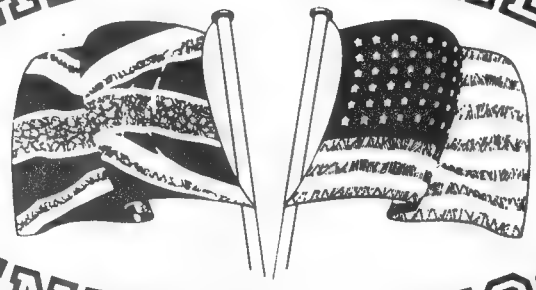

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Tom Ziuko to cloak this comic in various dull shades of off brown grey ought to hand in his resignation, 'cause it's a gimmick that doesn't work. On the plus side, Simpson's art is becoming less erratic, and Ennis's story proceeds along nice enough. Still, this comic ain't what she used to be - the heart and soul are gone, one fears, for good. (SM) 6

HELLBLAZER 44 <+> (Ennis & Simpson + Sutton) **Hellblzer** hasn't been this good since I can't remeber when. Constantine takes the only way out of his problem by dealing with the devils. The artwork still isn't great, though Sutton's hand helps. (JF) 7

JAGUAR 1 (Messner-Loebs & Williams + Marzan) The third of the new Impact titles which, like the **Comet**, offers an intriguing opener that leaves the Shield in the shade. The supporting cast is somewhat cliched, particularly the catty University females, but one to watch as the young Brazilian heroine comes to grips with her remarkable powers. (PCP) 7

JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA 52 (Giffen & DeMatteis & Von Eeden + Elliot) Sadistic Guy Gardner almost cripples Beetle and faces expulsion just as Max Lord is shot by a mystery assailant. Prelude to a 15-part chapterplay set to shake up the team. It promises a bumpy ride. (PCP) 8

JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA 53 <+ -> (Giffen & DeMatteis & Wozniak + Patterson) The team gets a new UN-appointed leader as Max sinks deeper into a coma and the ex-JLE Antarctica call to pay their respects. Usual chaos ensues but tinged with a hard edge. (PCP) 8

JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA ANNUAL 5 (Giffen & DeMatteis & various) Waverider checks out futures of various JL members while Max Lord lies at death's door. Interesting with some funny moments but as a segment of a longer storyline makes little impact. (PCP) 6

JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE 28 <+> (Giffen & DeMatteis & Sears + Elliot) Book-length slugfest that has Ice turning out to be the key to defeating Starro. Good stuff. (PCP) 8

JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA 4 <- -> (Strazewski & Artis + McLaughlin) Hawkman takes his turn against the Constellation menaces. Long on action - slow in plot. Gardner Fox and/or John Broome would have wrapped this tame storyline up in one issue back in the JSA's glory days. Nice to have these characters back but they deserve better. (PCP) 5

JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA 5 <- +> (Strazewski & Parobeck + Burchett) Hawkman & Flash discover the means to defeat Sagitarrius but fall victims to Vandal Savage. Storyline picks up pace making this the best episode to date - although that isn't saying much. (PCP) 6

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT 19 <+ -> (O'Neil & Von Eeden + Braun + Garcia-Lopez) Recuperated Batman pursues bad guys to Santa Prisca and battles sharks intent on making a meal of Alfred. A nightmare script lurching from bad to lousy. (PCP) 2

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT 20 <-> (O'Neil & Von Eeden + Braun + Garcia-Lopez) It's Holy Deathtrap time again. Can Batman escape and defeat the baddies. Of course he can - and does - leaving himself to face another absurd O'Neil script some months down the line. Death would have been a merciful release. (PCP) 2

LEGEND OF THE SHIELD 1 (Miehm + Waid & Miehm + Albrecht) Every star-spangled super-hero cliche is dredged up in a predictable plot that even includes the bombastic Thunderbolt Ross-type army general. Action fans will love it - anyone over five will see the plot holes a mile off. (PCP) 3

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 20 <+++> (Giffen & Bierbaums + Gordon) The story of Venado Bay is finally revealed, and we get to see a large number of the cast going about their daily business. The art looks as if it was done at a more sedate and interested pace, and there's even some humour thrown in. Saturn Girl at last gives birth to her second set of twins, but how long is Night Girl going to remain pregnant? (PHB) 7

L.E.G.I.O.N. 91 #29 <+++> (Grant & Kitson) If you ignore the pages wasted on Lobo, the rest of this comic is actually improving. At last Phase is given a prominent role and she is already forging this rag-tag of characters into a team. The art is pleasing, with the colouring giving it an unusual 3-d look. (PHB) 5

L.E.G.I.O.N. 91 #30 <+ -> (Grant & Kitson) New Legionnaires are inducted whilst the old ones battle amongst themselves as evil Kingpins extend their empires. Great fun aided by Kitson's detailed art. (JF) 7

MS TREE QUARTERLY 5 <+> (Collins & Beatty) Mike Tree Jr. is accused of rape and suspected of being a serial killer. Ms Tree investigates with her usual aplomb. Offers some surprises and maintains its standards. (PCP) 7

<-> An enjoyable read, as always, but Ms Tree's (mis)adventures are getting too predictable and formulaic of late, particularly with that hefty price-tag. Collins also writes brisk, engaging genre novels, so surely he could pep this title up some. (SM) 6

NEW TITANS 78 <+> (Wolfman & Grummet) The action and excitement are really hotting up in this much improved title, as the 'Dark Jericho' saga approaches its climax. The infusion of some interesting new characters and the shaking up of some old ones has brought this comic back up near the top of the heap, with a big boost from artist Grummet. (SM) 9

<+ -> This is turning out to be the best storyline the Titans have had in a long time, even if it doesn't match the quality of the Wolfman/Perez era. Tom Grummet will probably never be a fan-favourite penciller, but his style actually suits this book - which is more than can be said of even the best post-Perez Titans artists. Troia returns from Greece to find Titan's Tower destroyed and her team-mates gone; and no sooner than she's reunited with Nightwing, she gets whisked away by some Greek God (I assume into the big 'War of the Gods' crossover). The 'new' cyborg is interesting, although the 'how much of Victor Stone's humanity remains beneath the machine' question strikes me as a bit too... well, Robocop. (AA) 9

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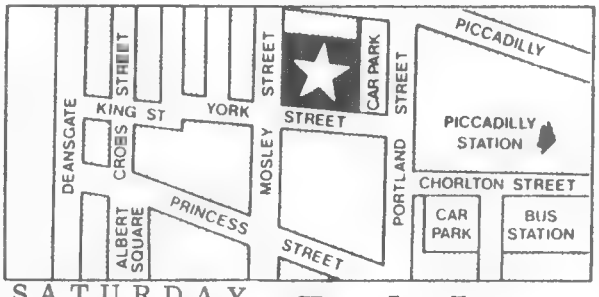

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QUESTION QUARTERLY 3 (O'Neil & Quesada + Solotoff + Ritter) Movie crew arrives in Hub City resulting in complex and confusing cross-cutting scenario that eventually makes sense but is hardly worth the effort. Joe Quesada - who has impressed on Spelljammer - comes aboard as new regular penciller and does well in the circumstances. (PCP) **5**

SANDMAN 28 <+ -> (Gaiman & Dringenburg) Colourist Dan Vozzo's lovely work helps make the temporary loss of artiste extraordinaire Kelly Jones a bit easier to bear. Gaiman resolves the Nadia dilemma nicely, but once again he's failed to maintain the quality over an extended storyline. (SM) **8**

SANDMAN 29 <+> (Gaiman & Giordano + Woch) The first in a series of single-issue tales from times past finds Sandman in Revolutionary France searching for his son. Impressive and intelligent, this is what comics should be. Nice art, too. (JF) **9**

STARMAN 36 <+ -> (Strazewski & Hoover + Hanna) Another predictable plot from the predictable Strazewski overcome somewhat by some fairly good "good-girl" art as Rampage and Phantom Lady find themselves trying to rescue Starman from a maniac biodroid. Lacks the drive of the Stern/Lyle period. (PCP) **3**

STAR TREK ANNUAL 2 (David & Fry + Starr & Swan + Starr) Kirk's early days at Starfleet Academy are investigated. Features many characters from the tv series and won't disappoint Star Trek fans. But it's strange that DC don't offer Curt Swan the title on a regular basis as his art is ideal. (PCP) **8**

SUPERBOY 18 <+> (Kupperberg & Mooney) A Japanese Spielberg reveals meta-human powers when threatened by mobsters. A nice laid-back tribute to the Godzilla movies. (PCP) **5**

SUPERMAN 57 <+> (Jurgens & Breeding + various) Eradicator seeks to kill Superman and turn Earth into the new Krypton. Solid entertainment throughout. (PCP) **9**

SUPERMAN 58 <+ -> (Jurgens & Breeding) Debut of the Bloodhounds - a special force created by Cadmus to bring down Superman should the need arise. Guardian & Dubillex guest as do the Hairies. Classic Kirby creations in a less than classic outing. This one's a bit of a pup. (PCP) **5**

<-> Project Cadmus wants to read Superman's mind and won't take no for an answer, all serving to remind how much the present incarnation of the Man of Steel owes to Jack Kirby's Fourth World one, twenty years ago. (AW) **5**

SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL 1 (L. Simonson & Bogdanove + The Super Team) A new Superman title. A chance for Weezie to write about more than mutants. A double-sized issue. What more could anyone want? Well, a cracking good yarn for one - and this issue has just that - mystery, suspense, and the Eradicator. Shame about the cover. (PCP) **9**

Pretty much the same old thing, and the various writers are going to have to work overtime to maintain fan interest in another Superman title every week - he's hardly the most fascinating and flexible character. Simonson doesn't help matters here with her bumpy narrative, and the presence of [illegible] artists doesn't make the going any smoother. (SM) **6**

SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL 2 <+++> (L. Simonson & Bogdanove + Janke) The first chance to see the new art team in full flight and - despite Superman's Jimmy Hill jawline - they do good. Pity the same cannot be said for the two "Marvel Reject" bad guys - Rorc & Sgt. Belcher. Nonetheless, a fast-paced script as Cerberus launches a napalm attack on Metropolis. (PCP) **7**

<-> After last month's inaugural jam and the cross-title Krypton Man saga, each Superman book reverts to one-off stories. Unfortunately this, the newest title, also has the weakest creative team: artist John Bogdanove has an utterly different style to all the other Superman artists while ex-**X-Factor** writer Louise Simonson lacks a sure grasp as yet of the central characters. Here's to on-the-job training... (AW) **3**

TWILIGHT 3 <-> (Chaykin & Garcia-Lopez) Nonsensical trash and a waste of the Garcia-Lopez talents. The potential for this series was immense; unfortunately the scripting chores were given to a "writer" who has long forgotten how to write an entertaining story. (PCP) **2**

WONDER WOMAN 56 <+++> (Perez & Phillips) What a difference a decent artist makes. No doubt Jill Thompson's taken a month off to learn how to draw faces, and without her distracting "art" one can better appreciate Perez's promising storyline. (SM) **7**

WONDER WOMAN 57 <+> (Perez & Thompson) This lead-in to DC's next crossover mini-series, **War of the Gods**, has the Amazons at large in America and under suspicion for a series of murders. Perez's feel for Wonder Woman is as reliable as ever, while Romeo Tanghal proves a more sympathetic inker for Thompson. (AW) **6**

MARVEL

AVENGERS 335 <-> (Harras & Eptig + DeZuniga) Two loosely linked storylines involving the Collector make for mindless actioner of little merit. The Collector spends much of the time comatose and the artists give the same impression. (PCP) **3**

<- - -> Second part of the 'Collection Obsession' storyline: Thane Ector escapes from the Collector and threatens the Earth. By-numnbers plotting combines with scrappy artwork to make this the lowest point yet in the decline of the once mighty Avengers. In a word, abysmal. (AW) **O**

AVENGERS WEST COAST '73 (Thomas & Ross + Freeman + Dzon) The cover blurb asks "Will the Avenger Fall?" and shows a Scarlet Witch a death's door. Given that she gets nothing more than a severe blow to the jaw it's not enough to justify such blatant misrepresentation. A typical plotless slugfest in the grand Marvel manner. (PCP) **2**

BLACK PANTHER: PANTHER'S PREY 3 (of 4) <+ -> (McGregor & Turner) Don McGregor has given

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each chapter of his latest Panther quartet a separate motif: this one concentrates on romance. While Soloman Prey continues to undermine Wakanada, the Panther comes to a major decision about his personal life. Not so much a superhero saga as an exploration into classical themes in superhero garb, Panther's Prey is the cat's miaow. (AW) **9**

CAPTAIN AMERICA 389 <+> (Gruenwald & Levins + Bulanadi) Episode 3 of the annual bi-weekly extravaganza has Cap, Paladin & Diamondback fighting for life in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean. What could have been a soggy mess turns out quite well involving as it dies a cruise-ship full of villainous super-femmes. The back-up concerning the Red Skull and Hauptmann Deutchland detracts from the overall package. (PCP) **5**

CONAN 246 <+ -> (Thomas & Hartle) No confirmation yet as to this comic's future. Thomas has improved this title immensely, though he's still yet to match his former Conan work - one hopes he'll at least get the chance to try. (SM) **7**

DAREDEVIL 293 <- -> (Chichester & Weeks + Williamson) Remains one of Marvel's better books despite (via an abominably pointless Punisher two-parter) its rapid fall from the grace so lovingly established by Ann Nocenti, with Scheeler's colouring working effectively with Williamson's inks. (DK) **6**

DAREDEVIL 294 <+> (Chichester & Weeks + Williamson) The Hand returns promising what has become the obligatory oriental sub-plot lurking in the wings. While Matt and Foggy chat over milk shakes and the King Pin's venture into media promotion. A definite improvement. (DK) **7**

DAREDEVIL 295 <-> (Chichester & Weeks + Williamson) The Man Without Fear has been going through a bit of a bad patch of late. No improvement here with the obligatory "he sells - stick him in" guest spot by the new Ghost Rider. Throw in a handful of ninjas to get them off the dole queue and the result is as predictable as they come. (PCP) **3**

<-> With the Ghost Rider gracing this issue's cover Marvel will no doubt (as with the recent Punisher story) sell more copies in what must be seen as an increasingly obsessional 'fan-boy' market.

Cynicism aside, D. G. Chichester writes a reasonable story that includes the surprise appearance of Sgt. Fury's old nemesis Baron von Strucker. (DK) **7**

<+> Daredevil's private life is temporarily set aside to concentrate on intricate plot machinations: the Kingpin, the Hand and the Hydra make their moves while DD and the Ghost Rider fight underlings. SHIELD scribe Chichester is the best writer to hit DD since Miller, turning the book into more of a pulp/espionage thriller than it has been of late. (AW) **7**

DEATHLOK 1 (McDuffie & Wright + Cowan) Hot on the heels of the limited series, the new Deathlok tries to find the whereabouts of his human body. Despite several holes in the plot, a nice idea and one that will no doubt be spun out for a few months yet. Superior artwork helps, too. (AW) **7**

DR STRANGE 30 <+ -> (R. & D. Thomas + Marrinan) Well-paced issue in which Doc outwits the Devil, and Marrinan almost makes you forget his predecessor's exquisite pencils. (SM) **8**

DR STRANGE 31 <-> (Thomas & DeZuniga) An Infinity Gauntlet crossover with Doc persuading a despondent Silver Surfer to Do His Duty. Someone's got to do it, I suppose. (AW) **4**

EXCALIBUR SPECIAL: THE POSSESSION (Higgins & Morgan + Mounts) The artwork in this story literally glows due to some great colouring by Paul Mounts. The story starts off well and goes downhill all the way from there. If you haven't read it yet be warned - the cringe factor is high - especially when the ghosts of Doug Ramsey (New Mutant) Jackdaw (Captain Britain's sidekick) and Changeling (X-Force foe) appear. No rest for the dead - or dignity, for that matter...! (AA) **3**

What strikes me most is the excellent colour which gives much pleasure when reading its 48 pages of ad-free comic. The account itself of Meggan's team mates fathoming out her possession becomes secondary. Indeed one almost forgets the countless cliches that so tiresomely pervade "serious" superhero prose. More of the same quality printing, please! (DK) **9**

FANTASTIC FOUR 354 <+> (W. Williamson) Ding-a-ling and whooo-whooo and get your ticket to ride on the Cross-Time Express as the FF, pursued by Justice Peace, escape the clutches of the Time Variance Authority. Over-wordy but helter-skelter swan-song as Walt departs leaving the team in their skivvies. (PCP) **7**

<-> Simonson's got the pace down, but this issue lacks the power and depth. (SM) **6**

<+ -> Neat resolution to the cross-time saga, as Reed uses his world class brain to save the day while the rest provide diversions and helping hands. Oh for the days when the only time-travelling in the Marvel universe was done by Kang the Conqueror and Zarrko the Tomorrow Man. (AW) **6**

GROO 78 <+ -> (Marvel/Epic; Aragones & Evanier) The return of the one-issue plot continues with 'The Book Burners' a tale introducing an absolute dastard called Bowdler who has eyes for Weaver's newest novel. Such consistent characterisation as Aragones and Evanier unflaggingly produce will indubitably, like all great art should, command respect

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for many years to come. (DK) 10

GROO 79 <+> (Marvel/Epic) gnawing hunger persuades Groo to try to hire out his swords to some monks whose interests are less than virtuous. Thereby providing a highly entertaining episode through which Groo proudly errs in his own inimitable way. Delightful. (DK) 10

GROO 80 <+ -> (Marvel/Epic; Aragones & Evanier) Still very hungry and even more fed up with sauteed lizard, Groo and Rufferto deign to improve their diet by guarding a caravan. So do the creators spoil us again with the start of another four-parter 'The Legend of Thaiis' - which will no doubt inspire Groo to even greater depths of self-indulgence. (DK) 10

HULK 383 <+ -> (David & Keown) It's obvious the creative team is having a ball putting this comic together and their arrogant, intelligent Hulk is emerging as the definitive version of Bruce Banner's alter ego. This issue is only marred by the sudden intrusion of the ominipresent Infinity Gauntlet storyline. (SM) 9

HULK 384 <+> (David & Keown) Brilliant, poignant 'Beauty and the Beast' story exquisitely rendered by Dale Keown. At the moment, Marvel's best monthly. (SM) 10

INFINITY GAUNTLET 1 (Starlin & Perez) Marvel's summer '91 mega monster reads a bit matter-of-factly, and one can't help compare it with all those great Thanos stories that Starlin did back in the late lamented Adam Warlock title, which was one of Marvel's more adventurous comics. And, speaking of which, it looks like Warlock will be the latest Marvel hero to return from the dead. If only life were like the Marvel Universe, where death is just a temporary setback. A fair read so far, but little more. (SM) 6

INFINITY GAUNTLET 2 <+> (Starlin & Perez) AKA the professionals re-do Secret Wars. You know the score: all the heroes band together to save the Universe. The leading roles in this pantomime are all taken by writer Starlin's cast of travelling players from his Silver Surfer, Adam Warlock and Captain Marvel series: Thanos as the Beyonder, Adam Warlock (back from the dead) as principal boy, the Surfer as Buttons, and Mephisot and Mistress Death as the ugly sisters. All this and Perez's glorious pencils too... For all unregenerate superhero fans, the best mass superhero team-up yet from Marvel. (AW) 9

IRON MAN 270 <+ -> (Byrne & Ryan) After years of mistreatment at the hands of lesser writers, the Mandarin's rehabilitation by John Byrne as one of Marvel's great villains continues apace as the Chinese government makes Tony Stark an offer he can't refuse. If only Byrne were pencilling it as well... (AW) 7

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS 81 <+> (Windsor-Smith and others) Weapon-X breaks loose and runs amok at the mysterious project in chapter 9 of Wolverine's origin. Sure to reprinted in book form next year. Elsewhere, Steve Ditko wraps up his two-part Captain America story, Marshall Rogers tries his hand at a Daredevil short and James Fry tackles Ant-Man. (AW) 6

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS 82 <-> (Windsor-Smith and others) The professor's plans turn to panic as he tries to stop the runaway juggernaut that is Weapon-X. Barry Windsor-Smith's superlative artistry turns an otherwise interminable saga into a subtly gripping howdunnit. Three inventory stories add the padding. (AW) 5

MOON KNIGHT 28 <-> (DeMatteis & Garney + Palmer) Allegorical and lacklustre narrative fails to engender any interest in either the plot or the characters. A non-starter compared to the Moench/Sienkiewicz Stained Glass Scarlet stories. (PCP) 2

NAMOR THE SUB-MARINER 17 <+> (Byrne) John Byrne is probably the closest thing to classic Stan Lee stories these days: give him a bunch of old Lee/Kirby characters and away he goes. Here he takes off with Namor, Namorita, Iron Fist, Ka-Zar, Zabu, Shanna, the Griffin and the Super-Skrull, not to mention the UN and the Savage Land, and fits them all seamlessly into another minor classic. (AW) 8

NEW MUTANTS ANNUAL 7 (Nicieza & Yap + Panosian + various) Promising start to the 'Kings of Pain' crossover (continuing in the 1991 **New Warriors**, **X-Men** and **X-Factor** annuals). Of significant interest to X-Fans is the well-executed 'Killing Stroke' back-up strip detailing the end of the Freedom Force. (AA) 6

Excellent, well-paced story with exciting, crisp artwork. This new X-Force team certainly whets your appetite for their forthcoming monthly book. Good back-up stories featuring The Freedom Force and the X-Terminators. Plus, (dontcha just love the bonuses you get in these annuals) a New Mutants organisational chart and a couple of team pin-ups. Well worth the money. (PHB) 9

NEW WARRIORS ANNUAL 1 (Nicieza & Bagley + Albrecht + various) Part two of the 'Kings of Pain' crossover. Seeing X-Force and the New Warriors working together is a lot of fun, strengthened by the fact that Nicieza writes for both the regular monthly books. Also enjoyable is the light-hearted Speedball back-up strip. The separate origins of the individual New Warriors at only 2/3 pages each reads very poorly, but at least will be helpful to readers unfamiliar with the characters' pasts. (AA) 6

Continuing from the New Mutants Annual we have the obligatory fight between the two teams but the story is good, pushing the story onwards. Added goodies this time include the

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origins of the New Warriors, and of the team itself, and a fun story featuring Speedball. (PHB) 8

PUNISHER: POINT OF VIEW 2 <-> (Starlin & Wrightson) Surprisingly worse than the first issue - I hope that these two did it for the money. Well, they must have! The Punisher, among others stalks psycho who drinks blood for sustinance but all is not what it seems. Or rather, it is. (JF) 4

QUASAR 27 <+ -> (Gruendwald & Capullo) Fairly interesting comic with cosmic concerns, striving to ve something more than the standard Marvel fluff. (SM) 8

SILVER SURFER 50 <+> (Starlin & Lim) Count yourself lucky if you got one of these when they came out. Marvel has come up with perhaps the most stunning and attractive cover of all time. The story inside's not too bad, either, as the noble one discloses a guilty secret from his past. As the comic was an instant sell-out, and is already going for £10 in some West End shops as I write this, it doesn't bode well for the future. Already a glow-in-the-dark Ghost Rider has been released, and one wonders what will be next - a Punisher comic with a real gun? Sandman with a sleeping pill - or the ultimate: an invisible issue of the Fantastic Four! (PCP) 8

SILVER SURFER 53 <+> (Marz & Lim + Christopher) An interesting tale of power and control as our hero apparently initiates a major war between the Skrulls and the Kree Marz writing deserves better than the rushed artwork offered. (JF) 6

THOR 434 <+> (DeFalco + Frenz & Milgrom) Perhaps it's Frenz's writing unput, but after lying dormant for so long, Thor's beginning to generate a bit of excitement. (SM) 7

<+ -> New Thor Eric Masterton wades through the ranks of the Asgardians in search of his predecessor. Thor's new outfit is the only fresh thing about this title these days. (AW) 3

UNCANNY X-MEN 279 <+++> (Claremont & Nicieza + Kubert + Williams) A stunningly-drawn issue by Andy Kubert, pitting Colossus, under the control of the Shadow King against Professor X. It's just great to have them both back. Elsewhere the other mutants are fighting each other. Things are building well for the formations of the new teams. At last the X-books are well worth reading again. (PHB) 9

<+> All the old crew are turning up: Professor X, Colossus, Rogue. Anyone would think some membership reshuffle were in the works... Guest artist Andy Kubert's wonderful pencils don't quite mesh with resident inker Scott Williams' inks, but a definate improvement over the last two issues. (AW) 6

UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL 15 (Nicieza & Raney + Rubinstein) The mixed squad of the New Mutants and the X-Force head off for Muir Island and ends up facing the might of Legion, Lorna Dane, Moira McTaggart, Madrox and Siryn. However the Mutants known as Harness and Piecemeal complete their task of resurrecting the evil and unstopable Proteus. (PHB) 8

WOLVERINE 41 <+ -> (Hama & Silvestri) Enter Sabretooth, claiming to be Wolverine's long-lost dada, but is he telling the truth? An all right yarn as such, but the feeling persists that the creative team isn't living up to its potential, and could be producing more significant and challenging fare. (SM) 7

X-FACTOR 68 <+++> (Portacio & Lee + Claremont + Thibert) Exciting, fast-paced story, with X-Factor fighting Medusa and Crystal of the Inhumans, amongst others. Cyclops is faced with his son dying or losing him for ever. A definite improvement over recent issues. (PHB) 7

<- +> Another mass free-for-all, this time involving X-Factor, the Inhumans, and Apocalypse and his minions, not to mention the fate of Cyclops' infant son. The artwork is as stunning as the plot is confusing: sort of Twin Peaks meets the Legion of Super-Heroes, with the best and worst aspects of both. (AW) 7

X-FACTOR 69 <+ -> (Nicieza & Portacio + Task Force X) The "Endgame" saga now over (the point of which was obviously to get rid of unwanted characters - Ship and Cyclop's baby son) the "Muir Island" saga continues from the pages of the **Uncanny X-Men**. This issue features a host of mutants, leading right into the 'mutant-shuffle' resulting in a new **X-Men** 1. Guest writer Fabian Nicieza does an admirable job here, just before Peter David begins his stint. (AA) 8

X-FORCE 1 (Liefeld & Nicieza) There's no justice in a world where this New Mutants title becomes Marvel's best seller ever, before anyone's even seen the thing, though no doubt it'llbe relegated to the number two slot by the forthcoming new **X-Men**. So what's it like? About what you's expect - a bunch of hopped up mutants distinguishable from each other only by their costumes and appearance engage in a long battle with another group of talkative mutants distinguishable only by appearance, and a superficial character trait or two. Liefeld's art, meanwhile, is so busy and Brad Vancata's cloours so bright that the eye can barely focus on the page, which is probably good cover for visual shortcomings. Mutant fans will be satisfied with this, but more demanding readers will probably only scratch their heads in dismay at how such one-dimensional pap can be so popular. (SM) 3

First issues are rarely as solid and on course as this one, the team 'origin' already having been dealt with in the last three issues of New

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Mutants. Speaking of which, this is clearly not the New Mutants - even if the book is an extension of it (in fact, Professor Xavier could quite logically reform 'his' New Mutants, but let's not give Marvel any more X-ploitative ideas! X-Mutants? Nah.)

Cable and co. are after the terrorist group "Mutant Liberation Front", leading to a cameo by Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D.. Meanwhile, Sunspot and Gideon face the return of X-Men adversary Tom Cassidy. The art is great, as is the dialogue, and this will undoubtedly match the sales of the X-Men books in its continued run. (AA) **10**

The mutant genesis begins in a major way. Liefeld shows that his art is at its peak when he inks it himself. The story is pretty basic but does provide further insights into some of the characters. I don't read **New Mutants** but I think I will read this. (JF) **8**

INDEPENDENTS

ARMOR 9 <+ -> (Continuity; Stone & Springer + Nebres) Armor decides to takes on a street gang consisting of the type of costumed punks only ever seen in comics and bad movies; he gets injured and is taken to the 'Kracklin' Good Chicken House of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation' where (surprise, surprise) Things Are Not What They Seem. I'm not making that last piece up, by the way. Actually, this is an enjoyable comic, if a little garish, and Frank Springer's pencils are well complimented by the inks of Rudy Nebres. (LC) **7**

CEREBUS 145 <- +> (Aarvark Vanaheim; Sim & Gerhard) Following her debut last issue, Doris eminates more charm and finds a friend in Cerebus.

So far slowly paced, the 'Melmoth' storyline has been notably rich in the human observations which are a major characteristic of the **Cerebus** mythology. Also the **Cerebus** preview 'Cranial Intrusion' should offer fun and games for all you would-be colourists. (DK) **9**

CEREBUS 146 <- +> (Aardvark Vanaheim; Sim & Gerhard) Is Cerebus finally emerging from his delerium as he invites conversation from a passer-by? Not so Oscar whose worsening health is related with much tenderness. In addition the 'Single Page' returns alongside a preview of 'Horror in the Dark' by the absolute master of mammary gland and gluteus maximus rendering, Richard Corben. (DK) **9**

CHEVAL NOIR 18 & 19 <+ -> (Dark Horse; various) As always, a lot of good reading here. For my own personal taste, the 0vest of the continuing stories is Joe Haldeman's 'Forever War', whose message can never go out of fashion. 'The Great Power of the Chninkel' keeps improving as the tale unfolds and there's a seemingly endless supply of Adele Blan-Sec stories from the prolific pen of Jacques Tardi. The sleeper from the last few issues has been Cosey's 'Voyage to Italy', which has gradually made me learn to care for the characters. As if al the above wasn't enough, there's also Eddie Campbell, Brian Bolland, Rick Geary and Phil Elliot plus a host of others. I can thoroughly recommend this comic. (LC) **8**

CONCRETE: FRAGILE CREATURE 1 (of 4; Dark Horse; Paul & Elizabeth Chadwick) Concrete embarks upon a film career as a stunt-man for Rulers of the Omniverse. Solid writing tackling relevant issues - although the dull line and colour art must be improved upon if it is to work as well as the original series did in black and white. (DK) **8**

A fine tale of our hero's involvement in the film industry. Everything you always wanted to know about movie-making exposed in a condemnation of all that is Hollywood - with a bit of fun. Chadwick's best artwork for a long time adds to it. (JF) **8**

DANGLE 1 (Cat-Head Comics; Lloyd Dangle) Another hit or miss collection where the artist's personal concerns aren't necessarily all that fascinating for the rest of us. The best strips here are the ones that focus on something other than Dangle himself, such as the Gulf War, or the San Francisco earthquake, which go well with Dangle's primitive, exaggerated style. (SM) **6**

DARK HORSE PRESENTS 51 <+> (Dark Horse; various) Sadly, the only reason for picking this up is 'Sin City' episode two by Frank Miller. Needless to say, it's brilliant and makes up for the ordinariness of the rest. (JF) **8**

DRAWN & QUARTERLY 5 <+ -> (Drawn & Quarterly; various) The flagship title of a publisher making good use of the creme de la creme of mainly Canadian comics artists. Everyone must read this first-class package. It contains several prime pieces to delve into, of which Bernie Mireault's 'The Gross-out Contest' (ah! childhood memories) and Mary Fleener's 'Extreme Generation' are golden. (DK) **10**

EIGHTBALL 6 <+ -> (Fantagraphics; Clowes) While I'm starting to itch for a resolution or conclusion to the 'Velvet Glove' storyline, Clowes confirms that it's in the shorter, "slice of life" pieces that he really excels. 'Marooned on a Desert Island with the People on the Subway' is classic Clowes at his devastating best. Clowes is an original and special talent, not so much in a class of his own, as in a world of his own. (SM) **9**

ELEMENTALS 18 <+> (Willingham; Leeke & Chen) Time out in Avalon as Dravagon - from Willingham's **Ironwood** comic - travels to the ends of the Earth to destroy an egg. But this is no ordinary egg. Brilliant script enhanced by more than competant artwork. (JF) **9**

FEMFORCE 34 <+> (Americomics; Levins & Black & Heike + Dell + The Count) Ever since 1982 the Black Shroud has been the major evil force in the AC Universe, forming the link between seemingly unconnected stories and events. For nine years and despite poor sales and cancellations, Bill Black has kept essential threads running into surviving and new titles. No mean feat and worthy of a few plaudits. Now all those diverse threads pull together as the AC heroes and heroines - along with a substantial number of Golden Age greats (and not so greats) finally strike back. The start of a multi-part epic reliving the fun style of comics. Buy it - if you can find it! (PCP) **10**

FROST 1 <+ -> (Caliber; Kevin VanHook) The story of a Vietnam vet who lets himself get talked into

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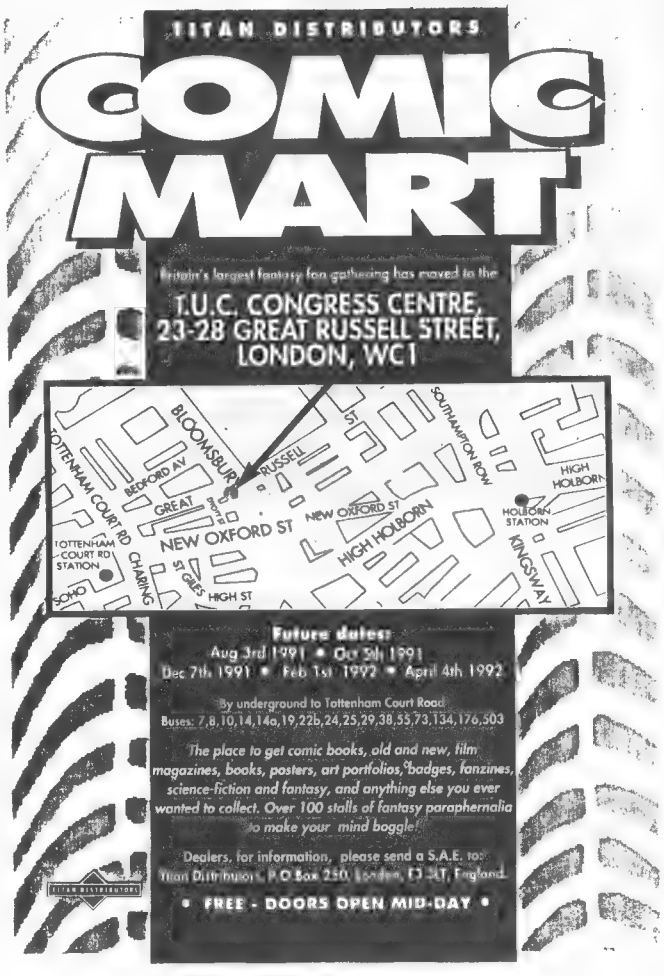
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joining a mercenary group hired to rescue a politician's daughter. The story and art are all the work of VanHook, and his pencils are quite good - in fact, his inks detract, and I've seen better artwork by him before, but this is worth sticking with for the time being. (LC) 6

GOOD GIRL ART QUARTERLY 3 <+> (Americomics) Continuing the Femforce/Shape Changers chapterplay (Moore & Hunt) plus reprints of Camilla and Sky Girl (both Baker) and Firehair (Bob Lubbers). Rounded out with features on Screen Jungle Queens and an entertaining little piece revealing connections between Will Eisner, Bob Kane, Jack Kirby and others with a 1937/38 English comic called "Wags". Colour and black and white and good value for money. (PCP) 9

HORROR IN THE DARK 1 (Fantagor; Richard Corben) Usual excellent work from Corben, he's one of the best comics artists working today. This horror anthology displays all his trademarks; superb airbrushing and amply endowed females. But this time at least half the art is computer-generated - and to very good effect. Corben's stuff is normally outside the mainstream and sales suffer as a result; an unfortunate state of affairs for the fans - and those who are not are missing some very good comics. Support this book. (LC) 7

THE JAM 5 (of 5) <- +> (Slave Labour; Mireault) At long last, having got into all kinds of inter-dimensional trouble with religious fanatics, terrorists, smugglers and the Devil, **The Jam** emerges unscathed in a finale to what has been a really enjoyable trip, regardless of its irregularity. A surreal tale told in an impressionistic stle that could teach much to the many barely competant "nice" 'artists' around who mistakenly thing that they can draw - let alone paint. (DK) 8

LAST OF THE VIKING HEROES SUMMER SPECIAL 3 (New Genesis; Thibodeux + Lasick) Tongue-in-cheek adventure serving to re-unite the Vikings and the TMNTurtles. Nothing special but Turtle fans will go berserk trying to find this one! (PCP) 4

LOVE & ROCKETS 35 <+> (Fantagraphics; Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez) Inside this erratically scheduled but nevertheless eagerly anticipated b&w magazine are three stories: 'Wig Wam Bam' part 3; 'Love & Rockets' part 5; 'Poison River' part 7 and a sketchbook section supplying some of the finest storytelling available today. (DK) 9

MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER 2-4 <+> (Valiant; Shooter & Nichols) Let's get the good points out of the way first: this book looks great, with topnotch artwork and colouring. Also, the writing has picked up slightly - with each issue there are fewer cliches and the odd surprise. That said, overall this is one sorry mess - the 'characters' are strictly monotone, the costumes naff, the plot feeble and the feel not so much '60s revival as living dead. Forget it. (AW) 3

MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER 4 <-> (Valiant; Shooter & Nichols + Layton) A poor ending to the Steel Nation story. The whole thing seems to be just going through the motions without any real feeling for the story or characters. (JF) 4

THE MAZE AGENCY 23 <+ ->

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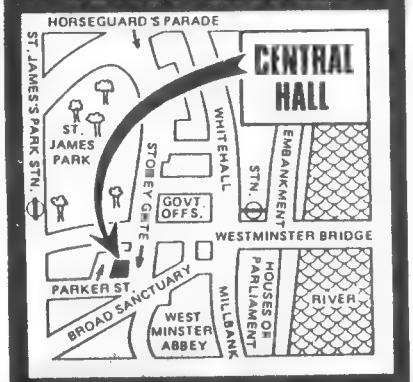

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DOORS OPEN 10.30 ADMISSION 50p

1(Innovation; Barr & Franchesco) The detective twosome investigate another locked room murder mystery, this time in an artificial Garden of Eden. Fun as always, this title seems to inhabit a genre of its own - the comics equivalent of Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot, with a dash of 'Moonlighting'. Awarded an extra point for innovation. (AW) 8

MELODY 6 <+ -> (Kitchen Sink; Rancourt & Morrisette) One of the few sexually explicit comics where the subject matter is integral to the storyline, and one of the best of its kind. Melody's story's an interesting one, and Rancourt and Morrisette tell it well. (SM) 9

MISSPENT YOUTHS (Brave New Words; Lee Ingersoll) Ingersoll writes better than he draws, although his tale of the denizens of a punk club is only sporadically amusing. (SM) 6

THE MUMMY 4 <+ -> (Millenium; Perozich & Mooney + Menendez) This book continues to be an engrossing read and at the same time quite lovely to look at, thanks to the painted art by Menendez. Rameses and Julie are returning to Egypt by sea, and all the main protagonists are gathered aboard, plotting and scheming to their own ends. So far, Rameses has been persuaded not to kill... this book isn't just for Anne Rice fans, but for anybody with an interest in decent comics. (LC) 8

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: PRELUDE (FantaCo; Skulan & Kastro) This excellently illustrated little b&w book acts as an introduction to FantaCo's mini-series based on the 1968 movie, and it really is very good indeed. There are only 17 story pages (no ads) plus wraparound cover, but at $1.50 it's good value. Not just for fans of Romero's superb film, but for horror fans generally and anybody who likes good comics art. (LC) 8

ON A PALE HORSE 1 (Innovation; Campiti & Okamoto) Anybody who flicks through this book will be hooked immediately by the glorious painted art by Mike Okamoto, and then hooked all over again by Campiti's adaptation of Piers Anthony's wonderful book. The story is about a man who kills Death and has to take his place: in the course of this first chapter he meets Fate (the subject of some gorgeous illustrations) and Time, who are in the same boat as him but handling it a little better. This is excellent stuff. (LC) 9

The first of Piers Anthony's 'Incarnations of Immortality' looks very nice but it is sparse, to say the least, on narrative, and seems kind of vacant. In this case, I'm afraid to say that I recommend you read the book - which will be cheaper, too! (JF) 5

METROPOL 5 <+ -> (Epic; McKeever) The pace picks up but the angels look slightly outnumbered. If you like McKeever, you'll love this. If not, but you like something different, give it a try. (JF) 7

THE PROFESSIONAL: GQLGO 13 #1 (Leed/Viz; Saito) Expressionless killing machine accepts assignment during the Falklands War. Quiet opener that promises some interesting developments but which would have been better without the colour. (PCP) 6

PULP DREAMS 1 (Eros; Wilbur)

Pure rip-off. Retailer ad sheets promised stories of some interest but which turns out to be one-page unconnected pin-ups. Okay for those who like to oggle femmes with big boobs and there is little doubt that Wilbur's good-girl art is palatable. (PCP) 1

REAL STUFF 3 <+ -> (Eichorn & various) A few good pieces here, but on the whole one is put off by Eichorn's enormous ego. The best thing about this issue is Carel Moisewitsch's strikingly ugly pencils. (SM) 5

ROBERTA GREGORY'S NAUGHTY BITS 1 (Fantagraphics; Roberta Gregory) With this collection, Gregory establishes herself as a major voice in the alternative/adult comics field. Artistically, she's borrowed from the work of Jules Ffieffer and Gilbert Hernandez, among others, but has developed a style uniquely her own. Her stories are hard hitting, outrageous and hilarious, almost impossible to read without a permanent smile. Gregory is one of the few people in her field producing truly worthwhile "adult" comics. Unfortunately, customs restrictions have limited the number of available copies of this title, but it's well worth seeking out. (SM) 10

SAMUREE 9 <+ -> (Continuity; Stone & Hoover and Harvey & Beachum) A strange mixture of crutch and lingerie shots, Neal Adams swipes and a Terminator rip-off, with a heroine who looks like the child she is when in "civvies" but who magically sprouts large breasts when in costume (maybe she wears a padded Kevlar bra). Funny thing is, I like the book (as with most Continuity titles) because they're good comics, nicely drawn and coloured. Try one and see. (LC) 6

SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM 1 (Valiant; Shooter & Windsor-Smith + Perlin) Two tales in one: the Barry Windsor-Smith drawn oriin and the Don Perlin regular story. Perlin does a fair imitation of Smith and Smith himself manages to overcome Shooter's limitations in the script department. Promising. (AW) 7

Shooter does a better job here than he's doing on **Magnus Robot Fighter**. Here, Solar somehow visits himself before his origin to prevent its occurence. No doubt he'll fail, but that origin is also being told in lovely six-page segments by Barry Windsor-Smith. (JF) 7

TERMINATOR: ONE SHOT (Dark Horse; Robinson & Wagner) Follow the story of another Sarah Connor stalked by a second Terminator sent alongside the original. The pace is breathtaking and packs as much in one issue as most characters get in a mini-series. The art follows along very well and the unusual special effect 'never before used in comics' is... not bad. (JF) 9

VAMPIRE LESTAT 10 <+ -> (Innovation; Perozich & Gross + Pace) This issue continues the 'origin' story of Those Who Must Have Blood, right up to the death of the burnt god and their flight from Egypt with Marius. Lestat now has to decide whether to drink the blood of the old ones and become even more resiliant and unkillable than before: his answer is of course "yes". This title has more than held my attention throughout its run, and I look forward eagerly to the final two issues. (LC) 8

XENOZOIC TALES 11 <+ -> (Kitchen Sink; Mark Schultz) One of the most consistently entertaining, and certainly one of the best-drawn books on the market. The only thing I don't like about this series is the length of time that elapses between chapters, blamed on Schultz's perfectionism, but rather that, I suppose, than a hack (ie. Marvel) job. Jack and Hannah have fled the city in the sea and are making for Wassoon, pursued by Scharnhorst's thugs and beset by some extremely large (and hungry) stone-age insects. Schultz's artwork really is superb, and makes the efforts of supposedly "hot" artists like McFarlane look like the pedestrian rubbish it is. Steve Stiles' work on the back-up story is right up there with it. A must-have book. (LC) 9

YUMMY FUR 24 <+>(Vortex; Chester Brown) 'The Little Man, a True Story' - though slightly exaggerated as Chester later admits - of schoolboy antics and desperation. Followed by a uniquely crude, but still incredibly subtle Gospel adaptation. A welcome return with this episode that relates the value of faith. (DK) 10

2001 NIGHTS 9 & 10 <+> (Viz; Yukinobu Hoshino) I am very, very sad to see the end of this wonderful series, which has seen some of the very best comics of this or any other year - by any criteria - story, art, characterisation or what have you. These final two issues are especially melancholic, with the story of the Earth-born spacers having to give way to the new generations who are completely at home in space. As science fiction it's superb in its own right, and as comics these are in a class by themselves. I would love to see them collected in one huge 700-page graphic novel (truly worthy of the title) and I'd happily pay the asking price. Anybody who hasn't yet connected with this series should investigate their local back-issue shop immediately. (LC) 10

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UK INDEPENDENTS

CEASEFIRE (Fanny; various) First from the new imprint for female comics creators, generated by the rapidly-growing organisation for the same, F.A.N.N.Y. "Readjust Your Sense of Reality" reads the front cover caption, and that's what **Ceasefire** does, gently but persistently debunking some of the myths perpetrated by military, media and politicians during the Gulf War. Notable satirical points are scored by Jackie Smith's and Julie Hollings' strips interspersed with pungent cartoons and solidly grounded in the thought-provoking sobriety of Carol Swain's 'Spoils of War'. But they do say that using humour is the best way of communicating a serious idea: this comic certainly works on that level, getting its message across without the slightest taint of that worthy, tedious, campaigning harangue so familiar from the revolting '70s. (SB) 8

DOWNSIDE 7 <+ -> (Joint Productions; McNamara & Ketley) The present storyline draws to a close headed by an apt quote' "It's a funny old world" Thatcher November 1990'. Now in between various related plots (more pot-bellies, dirty laundry, broken mirrors, bigotry, intimidation, landlords, shelters for the homeless, civil rights and searching for the funnyside to life promised for #8) it seems appropriate that I mention the magazine's highly effective use of two-colour printing. A factor that has definitely contributed to **Downside**'s rising up from amongst the dross of comic books. (DK) 8

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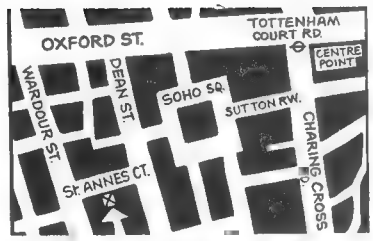

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An independently viewed look at hits, misses, prices, projects and people in the news as overheard by ITMA

MOVERS & SHAKERS

This month's headline maker are all Marvel titles: **Silver Surfer**, **Wolverine** and **Ghost Rider**.

In the months between the hulabaloo over **Spider-Man** finally beginning to wane (amidst rumours of McFarlane coming off the title) and fandom waiting with bated breath for the impact of "Mutant Genesis", other titles are getting the opportunity to hog some limelight ... most notably **Silver Surfer 50**.

By the time newsstands received their 60p priced sea-freight copies -- less than a month ago, some specialists were already charging upward of £2.50. At Titan's first TUC London Mart on June 22, only one copy was seen for sale, at £4.99. Now, it can be as high as £10.

The situation has been worsened by Marvel publicly apologising for the small print run, leading to 2nd and 3rd editions. With possibly 10,000 shipped for UK newsstands, seek around, they can't all have sold!

Ghost Rider - The Orange Edition

As **Surfer 50** goes to back to press, it's joined by two more titles, one being inevitable. **Ghost Rider 15** was solicited as a regular issue, which, once orders had been closed, we discovered would have a glow-in-the-dark cover. Needless to say, reorders on this new gimmick led to a second edition, which Marvel promises will be far more effective than the experimental first edition. Traditionally aiming at the 2nd edition colour of gold, Marvel will approximate the look with an orange glow.

Wolverine

Issue 41 of Larry Hama and Marc Silverstri's collaboration, the first 'bi-weekly' **Wolverine**, also goes into a second edition, as the puzzle over the relationship between Sabretooth and Wolverine is finally solved, and fans at last recognise the quality of this comic and its creators.

You can expect the **Infinity Gauntlet** Marvel mini to also go gold, as first editions have been in great demand, but some have been expressing doubt over the relative importance of this much-hyped title.

Armageddon 2001

No prizes for guessing that DC's first three **Armageddon** tie-in annuals have all gone into second printings. The **Superman, Batman** and **JLA** annual storylines have far surpassed any previous DC **Crisis**-style crossovers. With the promise of major changes brewing and the company leaning towards actually allowing progress instead of merely the illusion of such, the outcome promises to be both imaginative and rewarding from the original House of Ideas.

Who is Monarch?

Favourite now in the **Armageddon 2001** ultimate future villain identity sweepstakes is Captain Atom, by a clear lead.

With the character's own title about to be cancelled, and the startling revelation that he can actually create his own realities, the good Capn's destiny seems pre-ordained. It also adds a touch of irony to Waverider taking on Cap's identity in his **JLA Annual** storyline.

However, when Alan Moore wanted to revamp the Charlton heroes for DC (Captain Atom, Blue Beetle, Question, Peacemaker, etc) in his own revolutionary way, DC felt they didn't want him to kill off newly purchased characters, so he tweaked the project into **Watchmen**. But that **was** back then.

Incredible Hulk

The continually increasing demand for this Marvel sleeper has finally been reflected in both comic marts and shops. Back issues 367 and 369 are virtually impossible to find. Issue 377 is starting to fetch high prices and all other recent issues -- including the Bill Jaaska fill-ins -- are selling out fast. The title in now on most fans priority lists, and even die-hard non-Marvel readers are starting to pay attention to what is probably the most intelligently written superhero comic since the early issues of **Miracleman**.

New New Mutants

Often criticised for being bland and banal, **The New Mutants** has quietly been breaking records for inflated back issue prices. Now fans who got into the title through artist Rob Liefeld are buying up all back issues, especially the Brett Blevins ones, and the ten or so preceding Liefeld's takeover on pencil art. Expect Marvel to announce a reappearance of the **New Mutants** title next year under the team control of Moira McTaggert and Bansee. A title with a sale of amost 200,000 a month, surpassing **Avengers, Hulk, Daredevil, Surfer** and **Captain America** is not going to be forgotten, even if **X-Force** has taken over!

Few new books of magic from DC

DC has announced a deluge of new titles for the coming year, as the company attempts to catch up to Marvel. But very few look like they will attain the success of the recent **Books of Magic** mini-series. While it proved a winner for its creators a few months ago, it now looks set to

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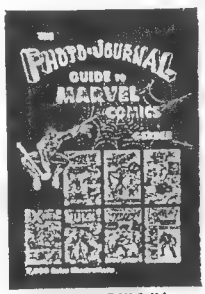

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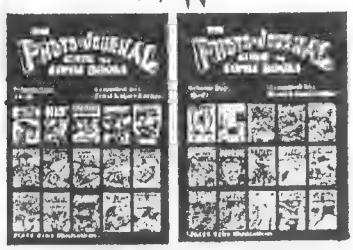

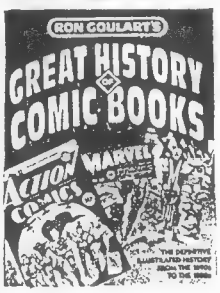

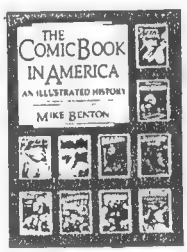

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profit the dealers. Despite GBD's newsstand distribution at a very reasonable £1.20, prices are expected to rise to double the original £2.45 import tag in the near future. In America, issue 1 is already commanding $10 - 12.

Flips flop

Mart mega-dealer *Flips Comics* recently advertised a **Batman 1** (vg+, £3750) for sale. When a potential buyer asked if it was the copy which had belonged to veteran comic dealer Alan Austin, and was told it had, he hastily declined to buy it. Several days later *Flips* discovered that Alan had been known to own a composite copy of the 1940 rarity, made up from several lesser condition incomplete copies. This was news to them as *Flipsy* had bought Alan's upgraded second copy which was not a composite. It would also be news to the potential buyer, if he ever went back to *Flips* and asked the second part of his question!

Strength in numbers

It was good to see such a healthy turn out at the first Comic Book Retailers Association meeting last month. Balancing out the discussion were representatives from two major comic mart organisers as well as all but one of this country's four direct sale importer/distributors. The midlands team was noticeable by its absence, but Titan and recent competitors Pacific and, to a more specialised extent, White Light, were all able to field questions and queries about the comics business. Shame all four couldn't have been there.

Hot and steamin'

Several fast-buck dealers have been independently importing copies of the Eros line of soft porn comics, refused by specialist distributors. Whether this is because of their belief in the freedom of the press or because they can charge up to £5 a copy is unclear. But one was heard to be moaning at the recent Comic Book Retailers Association meeting, having paid £3 a copy for a bulk order of **Young Witches 1**, not realising it had successfully cleared customs and is in most comic shops at £1.40.

X-Force X-Plosion

With its June debut, **X-Force 1** met with a phenomenal reader response. Many shops found customers willing to buy sets, with first week sales at least tripling normal **X-Men** monthly levels. *Forbidden Planet* London reported selling no less than 1500 copies in the first day.

While high sales have come come as a relief to speculating retailers, apprehension remains over August's **X-Men 1**. Customers have seemed willing to buy five different versions of **X-Force 1** in one feverish visit, but will they feel inclined to return across a five week period to follow the staggered release of the multi-cover **X-Men 1**? Either way, I doubt the wisdom of bulk buying as good investments. While neither title's first issue is likely to slump, with their staggering print runs I expect speculators will still be sitting on copies two years from now waiting for an appreciable sell-back value.

Great Krypton!

North London shop *Krypton Komics* suffered a pitiful response to its recent Platinum Spider-Man phone auction, with only one bid exceeding the reserve, and that turning out to be a bogus number in Brixton.

Central London's *Comics Showcase* had more success with their 50p a ticket charity raffle a copy, with over 400 tickets sold and a gleeful young Spidey fan winning first prize.

At presstime, the results of Blackpool's *Thunderbooks* charity raffle for a copy have still to be announced, but two weeks before any of the events took place Wellingborough's *Squonk* sold their copy via a telephone credit card order for £600. Had the buyer waited another fortnight, he may easily have obtained a copy for far far less. Yet another aspect of this increasingly strange market.

Misprint mania

Together with various phone-in fan queries, one of the original sources of the **Spidey 1** "Blue Lizard" story has furnished us with more misprint information. It seems that production lines are getting increasingly sloppy as a whole gamut of printing errors have recently turned up. Did you know that: **Silver Surfer 50** first edition has some copies with a white cover where the silver should have printed? Or that the **X-Force 1** cover comes in varying colours from light blue to dark purple, and some copies have no trading cards, or two or three cards inserted? Copies also exist with the UPC computer bar code area featuring Captain America's head as either a negative or positive image? A large number of copies of **Spider-Man 339** have double covers and many **New Mutants 100** copies have blotchy printing. The list is endless, but the values are not. It is often said that in Britain we get the end run copies, where colour variables are most likely to occur. But unless you suffer the stamp collector mania and want a full set including all misprint versions, don't be taken in.

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1940s & 1950s Pulps

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LETTERS

COMICS INTERNATIONAL's letters column is your forum for opinion on publications, writers, artists, prices, market trends and anything else connected with the industry. As such, opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher. Letters intended for publication will only be edited as a grammatical or space consideration. Write to us at:

Comics International Letters, PO Box 1937, London N3 2LP

The comics market continues to grow at an astonishing rate. We've added no less than eleven new specialist outlets to our distribution since last issue. With retailers keeping an eye on efficiency, we've also seen our returns reduce from an all-time high of 1572 to an amazing 355. We thank you, our advertisers thank you, and a few trees can breathe a sigh of relief.

. . . Dez Skinn/Editor

Ray Hopkins, 65 Manby Road, Castle Vale, Birmingham

Outside of **Comics International**, the few magazines about comics that we have now are very slick, very American, very expensive and very, very boring. Whereas your magazine is cheap, chunky and full of interesting things to read. A bit light on articles, perhaps, but what do you want for 30p?

What happened to the days of the 1970s when fanzines and article-zines were so thick on the ground?

Do you have any idea who stocks those **Terry and the Pirates** volumes covering the World War II strips which you mentioned last issue?

Fanzines, strip-zines, adzines and such went the way of fandom, Ray. It became a business rather than a small-time hobby. People look for profit before pleasure and the small guy gets squeezed out. It was more fun back then, but maybe, like our hobby, we've all grown up to face the real world. Anyone stocking the Canniff volumes may like to get in touch with you direct.

Clive Pugh, 126 Stanley Road Forest Fields, Nottingham

I feel that your magazine has a good balance between US and UK news as I collect (the uncollectable) Marvel UK titles, including those once produced by your own editor, Mr Skinn.

As supplier of most of the information on Marvel UK in the **British Comic Book Price Guide** for the last two years, I find your magazine really helps.

Not resting on our laurels, we'd really like to improve one aspect of our coverage, newspaper strips. Any knowledgeable reader with journalistic leanings is invited to get in touch with us.

John Miller, 57 Manor Place Edinburgh

It took me three pints to get through your latest issue which was, once again, a very interesting and informative read.

But while I appreciate the news section, I feel that a lot of your features and snippets could be more critical. Your Reviews Section is very critically fair, though.

It would be very easy to present critical news and features, but they would become totally subjective and only represent a minority opinion. We deliberately avoid cheap shots, even when we feel some product cries out for cynicism. Instead, we let our readers assess the facts presented and draw their own conclusions.

The comics industry has grown into a generic mass medium, appealing to a wide audience range, similar to books, television and movies. As a trade paper, we try to present the industry news in as unbiased a way as possible. On the other hand, the reviews section was deliberately created for a more critical and subjective viewpoint.

*Given the nature of **Comics International**, we also avoid in-depth articles and interviews, leaving those to others with a more tightly-targeted audience.*

Peter Dolan, 2 Akerman Road, Brixton, London SW9.

Glad to see your magazine is getting the success it so richly deserves. It by far surpasses the many other more expensive publications on the market.

The news section is excellent, your reviews are top notch and often very amusing, and I think your 'Movers & Shakers' section is great. I've taken the advice given many times, and it's never been wrong yet!

But the main reason I'm writing is to present a sequel to last month's story about a comic shop giving a regular customer a free **Fantastic Four 48** as a birthday present. I was chatting with one shop owner, after buying £46 worth of comics, and I asked him about an unpriced **Spider-Man 16**. He told me that if I bought all my new imports from his shop, I could have it for free. So now, that's my local shop.

With so much talk about expensive prices, I thought you'd like to hear that there's more than one caring comic shop left!

Peter, wisely, omitted the name of the shop, thus avoiding a massive queue of potential new customers waiting for their free back issues.

Danny King, somewhere in Brighton

On trends, trainspotters and brain death: Amid a so-called comics renaissance, we are told higher standards are sought in an attempt to promote comics as "not just for kids", and subsequently their appreciation as a valid form of expression.

A worthwhile pursuit indeed. Unfortunately, there are dreadfully few comics able to stand up to any **real** quality criteria. The vast majority, being not so amazing as some would have us believe, are hardly conducive to such ideals.

Moreover, for what it's worth, I have more fulfilling things to do than more about someone so severely devoid of common sense as to be taken in by the hype prevalent throughout the comics industry.

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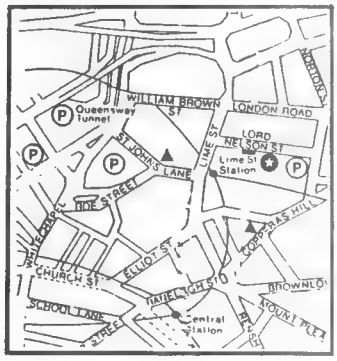

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Tiger 1975-1982, approx. 400 copies, plus **Roy of the Rovers** 1 (Sept. 1976) - 1982 (approx. 350). Must dispose of - any offers? Call Daniel Ford tel: 0428 714482 (Guildford area).

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John Creasy paperbacks/ hardbacks or any of his writing under various pseudonyms eg. J.J. Marric, Antony Morton. Please send lists to G.J. Sabin, 9 Westridge, Sedgely, Dudley DY3 3TQ or tel: 0902 678032.

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Captain America bisque and **The House of Horror** soft cover book. Telephone Andrew on: 0792 795373.

Needed desperately to finish Adams collection - **Jerry Lewis** 102-104; **Our Army at War** 182, 183, 186; **Star Spangled War Stories** 134, 144; **Weird Western Tales** 12, 13. Any conditions accepted, reasonable prices paid.

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WOULD BE ADVERTISERS PLEASE NOTE: Free private ads are meant to be for collectors only. Any ads which are taken to be from those buying for resale will not be printed free of charge.

TMNT (Mirage), **The Last of the Viking Heroes** (Genesis West), **Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hampsters** (Eclipse) **Samurai** (Aircel). If you have got any of the above for sale, or if you want a penpal write to: Steve Whitcher, 233 Mudford Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 4NR.

Good price paid for Titan graphic novel **Judge Dredd: City of the Damned**. Contact MO, tel: 0902 714363, after 6pm, please.

10c and 12c DC adventure, war, sf, fantasy and hero titles wanted to complete personal collection, not for resale. Am happy with good condition 'reading copies' provided they are complete, not interested in high price investment copies. If you're selling your comics, send me a list, or write for my wants, and cut the middle man out! Also urgently require replacements for following stolen from my collection: **Amazing Spider-Man** 1, 26-28; **Amazing Adventures** 1-6 (1st series); **Amazing Adult Fantasy** 7-14; **Amazing Fantasy** 15; **Avengers** 7, 10; **Capt America** 110, 112, 113; **Daredevil** 5; **Dr Strange** 174-179; **Journey into Mystery** 83-85, 87, 90, 94, 112, 114; **Tales of Suspense** 43, 45, 46, 48, 59; **Tales to Astonish** 43, 44, 46, 60, 61; **X-Men** 7, 9, 10, 94, 95; **Giant-Size X-Men** 1. Dez Skinn, Comics International, PO Box 1937, London N3 2LP

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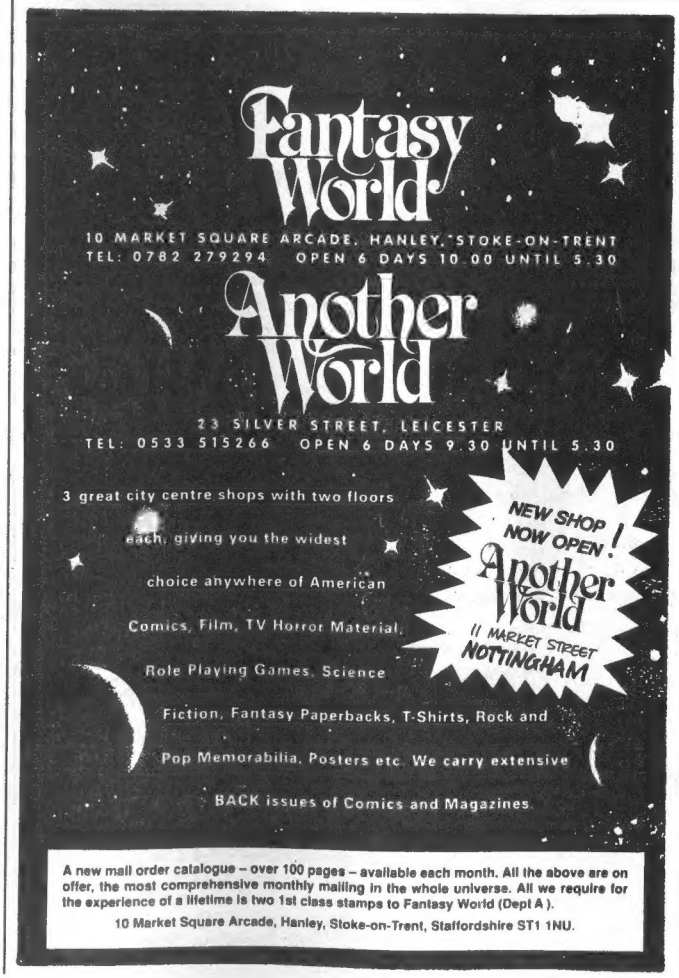
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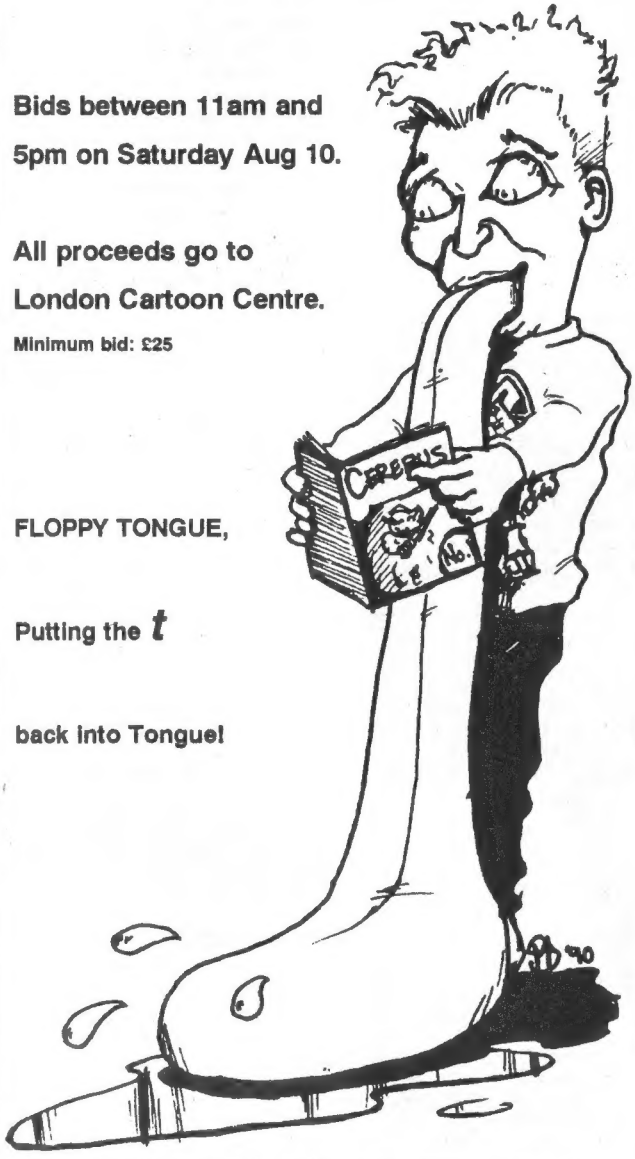

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EVENTS GUIDE

As an at-a-glance guide for readers, this listing gives the dates and locations of all forthcoming events advertised elsewhere this issue. A free service for advertisers, the bracketed number at the end of each entry denotes the advertising page this issue where further details appear.

AUGUST

3/8 **LONDON:** Comic Mart, T.U.C. Congress Centre, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1 (p 43)

18/8 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1 (p 17)

24/8 **EDINBURGH:** Strip Search 2 slide talk and guest panel, Edinburgh Book Festival, Charlotte Square Gdns (p 20)

24/8 **NOTTINGHAM:** Comic Mart, The Broadway, Broad Street, Nottingham. (p 24)

25/8 **BLACKPOOL:** Comic Collectors Fair, St Kentigerns Social Centre, Newton Drive, Blackpool (p 46)

SEPTEMBER

14/9 **NEWCASTLE:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Blackfriars Hall, New Bridge Street, Newcastle (p 39)

14/9 **LONDON:** Comic Fair, Central Hall, Parker Street, Westminster, London. (p 52)

21/9 **SHEFFIELD:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Main Hall, Sheffield Polytechnic, Howard Street (p 41)

28/9 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Polytechnic, Brunswick Building, Merrion Way, Leeds. (p 14)

29/9 **BLACKPOOL:** Comic Collectors Fair, St Kentigerns Social Centre, Newton Drive, Blackpool (p 46)

OCTOBER

5/10 **LONDON:** Comic Mart, T.U.C. Congress Centre, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1 (p 50)

13/10 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Crest Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool (p 59)

19/10 **LONDON:** Comic Fair, Central Hall, Parker Street, Westminster, London. (p 52)

19/10 **MANCHESTER:** Comic Mart, Piccadilly Plaza Exhibition Hall, York Street, Manchester (p 44)

19/10 **MANCHESTER:** Comic Mart, Parkers Hotel, Corporation Street, Manchester (p 26)

26/10 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Polytechnic, Brunswick Building, Merrion Way, Leeds. (p 14)

NOVEMBER

2/11 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart, Bluecoat Chambers Concert Hall, Liverpool (p 33)

2/11 **NOTTINGHAM;** Comic Mart, The Broadway, Broad Street, Nottingham (p 24)

3/11 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1 (p 17)

9/11 **SHEFFIELD:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Main Hall, Sheffield Polytechnic, Howard Street (p 41)

10/11 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Crest Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool (p 59)

16/11 **NEWCASTLE:** Comic Mart, Blackfriars Hall, New Bridge Street, Newcastle (p 39)

23/11 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Polytechnic, Brunswick Building, Merrion Way, Leeds. (p 14)

24/11 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace Special Edition, Royal Horticultural Society Old Hall, Vincent Sq, SW1 (p 34)

30/11 **LONDON:** Comic Fair, Central Hall, Parker Street, Westminster, London. (p 52)

30/11 **MANCHESTER:** Comic Mart, Parkers Hotel, Corporation Street, Manchester (p 26)

DECEMBER

7/12 **LONDON:** Comic Mart, T.U.C. Congress Centre, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1 (p 50)

14/12 **NOTTINGHAM:** Comic Mart, The Broadway, Broad Street, Nottingham (p 24)

JANUARY

5/1 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1 (p 17)

25/1 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Polytechnic, Brunswick Building, Merrion Way, Leeds (p 14)

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